

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 31

In this chapter Job gives an account of himself in private life, of the integrity and uprightness of his life, and his holy walk and conversation, with this view, that it might be thought that the afflictions which were upon him were not on account of a vicious course of life he had indulged unto, as was suggested; and he clears himself from various crimes which it might be insinuated he was guilty of, as from unchastity; and he observes the method he took to prevent his falling into it, and the reasons that dissuaded him from it, (^{<K3101>}Job 31:1-4); from injustice in his dealings with men, (^{<K3105>}Job 31:5-8); from the sin of adultery, (^{<K3109>}Job 31:9-12); from ill usage of his servants, (^{<K3113>}Job 31:13-15); from unkindness to the poor, which he enlarges upon, and gives many instances of his charity to them, (^{<K3116>}Job 31:16-23); from covetousness, and a vain confidence in wealth, (^{<K3124>}Job 31:24,25); from idolatry, the worship of the sun and moon, (^{<K3126>}Job 31:26-28); from a revengeful spirit, (^{<K3129>}Job 31:29-31); and from inhospitality to strangers, (^{<K3132>}Job 31:32); from covering his sin, (^{<K3133>}Job 31:33); and fear of men, (^{<K3134>}Job 31:34); and then wishes his cause might be heard before God, (^{<K3135>}Job 31:35-37); and the chapter is closed with an imprecation on his head if guilty of any injustice, (^{<K3138>}Job 31:38-40).

Ver. 1. *I made a covenant with mine eyes*, etc.] Not to look upon a woman, and wantonly gaze at her beauty, lest his heart should be drawn thereby to lust after her; for the eyes are inlets to many sins, and particularly to uncleanness, of which there have been instances, both in bad men and good men, (^{<G342>}Genesis 34:2 ^{<O112>}2 Samuel 11:2); so the poet ^{f1120} represents the eye as the way through which the beauty of a woman passes swifter than an arrow into the hearts of men, and makes impressions there; (see ^{<G124>}2 Peter 2:14); hence Zaleucus ordered adulterers to be punished, by plucking out the eyes of the adulterer ^{f1121}; wherefore Job, to prevent this, entered into a solemn engagement with himself, laid himself under a strong obligation, as if he had bound himself by a covenant, made a resolution in the strength of divine grace, not to employ his eyes in looking on objects that might ensnare his heart, and lead him to the commission of

sin; he made use of all ways and means, and took every precaution to guard against it; and particularly this, to shut or turn his eyes from beholding what might be alluring and enticing to him: it is said^{f1122} of Democritus, that he put out his eyes because he could not look upon a woman without lusting after her:

why then should I think upon a maid; of corrupting and defiling her, since he had made a covenant with his eyes, and this would be a breach of that covenant: and therefore, besides the sin of lusting after her, or of corrupting her, he would be a covenant breaker, and so his sin would be an aggravated one: or he made a covenant with his eyes, to prevent any impure thoughts, desires, and inclinations in him; for the eye affects the heart, and stirs up lust in it, and excites unclean thoughts and unchaste desires: this shows that the thought of sin is sin; that fornication was reckoned a sin before the law of Moses; and that Job better understood the spirituality of the law than the Pharisees did in the time of Christ, and had the same notion of lust in the heart being fornication and adultery as he had; and that good men are not without temptation to sin, both from within and from without; and therefore should carefully shun all appearances of evil, and whatsoever leads unto it, and take every necessary precaution to guard against it.

Ver. 2. *For what portion of God [is there] from above?* etc.] What good portion, as the Targum paraphrases it, can impure persons expect from God? such who indulge themselves, and live in the sin of uncleanness, cannot hope to have any part in God, or a portion of good things from him; he is above, and in the highest heavens, and every good thing comes from thence, and from him there; and particularly the spiritual blessings, wherewith he blesses his people, are in heavenly places in Christ, and from thence come to them; and here a special respect may be had to God himself, who is the portion of his people, both in life and at death, and to all eternity; but men that live a vicious course of life cannot conclude they have any part in God and Christ, nor in the grace of God, and the blessings of it, nor enjoy communion with him:

and [what] inheritance of the Almighty from on high? heaven is an inheritance which belongs to the children of God, and he, as their heavenly Father, has bequeathed it unto them; this is from the almighty God, God all sufficient; he has chosen this inheritance for them, and appointed them unto it; this is laid up by him and reserved in heaven for them; and he gives both

a right unto it, and a meetness for it, and will put them into the possession of it: but then impure persons, as fornicators and adulterers, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ, (~~485~~Ephesians 5:5); and this was a reason with Job, and what had an influence on him, to be careful to avoid the sin of uncleanness. Some understand the words as a question concerning what would be the portion and heritage of a wicked man, a corrupter of virgins; the answer to which is given in the next verse, destruction and a strange punishment; this is their portion from God, and the heritage appointed to them by him; (see ~~319~~Job 20:29).

Ver. 3. [*Is not destruction to the wicked?* etc.] It is even to such wicked men, who live in the sin of fornication, and make it their business to ensnare and corrupt virgins; and which is another reason why Job was careful to avoid that sin; wickedness of every sort is the cause of destruction, destruction and misery are in the ways of wicked men, and their wicked ways lead unto it, and issue in it, even destruction of soul and body in hell, which is swift and sudden, and will be everlasting: this is laid up for wicked men among the treasures of God's wrath, and they are reserved that, and there is no way of deliverance from it but by Christ:

and a strange [punishment] to the workers of iniquity; the iniquity of fornication and whoredom, (~~288~~Proverbs 30:20); who make it their business to commit it, and live in a continued course of uncleanness and other sins; a punishment, something strange, unusual, and uncommon, as the filthy venereal disease in this world, and everlasting burnings in another; or "alienation"^{f1123}, a state of estrangement and banishment from the presence of God and Christ, and from the society of the saints, to all eternity; (see ~~4256~~Matthew 25:46 ~~3009~~2 Thessalonians 1:9 ~~4665~~Luke 16:26).

Ver. 4. *Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?*] That is, God, who is above, and the Almighty that dwells on high; he looks down from heaven, and beholds all the ways and works, the steps and motions, of the children of men; there is no darkness where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves; the fornicator and adulterer choose the night season for the commission of their sin, fancying no eye sees them; but they cannot escape the eye of God, who is omniscient; he observes the ways they walk in, the methods they take to compass their designs; he marks and counts every step taken by them, as he does indeed take notice of and reckons up every action of men, good and bad; and the consideration of this was another argument with Job to avoid the sin of uncleanness; for however

privately he might commit it, so as not to be seen by men, it could not be hidden from the all seeing eye of God. Some take these words to be an obstetation, or appeal to God for the truth of what he had said; that he made a covenant with his eyes, and took every precaution to prevent his failing into the sin of uncleanness; and he whose eyes were upon his ways, knew how holily and unblamably he had walked; or else, as if the sense was, that had he given in to such an impure course of life, he might expect the omniscient God, that is above, and dwells on high, would bring upon him destruction, and a strange punishment, since he is the avenger of all such; others connect the words with the following, doth he not see my ways and steps, whether I have walked with vanity, etc. or not?

Ver. 5. *If I have walked with vanity*, etc.] Or with vain men, as Bar Tzemach interprets it, keeping company and having fellowship with them in their vain and sinful practices; or in the vanity of his mind, indulging himself in impurity of heart and life; or rather using deceitful methods to cheat and defraud others; for this seems to be another vice Job clears himself of, acting unjustly in his dealings with men, or dealing falsely with them:

or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; to cheat men in buying and selling, being ready and swift to do it, and in haste to become rich, which puts men oftentimes on evil ways and methods to attain it; (see ^{<1833>}Proverbs 28:20).

Ver. 6. *Let me be weighed in an even balance*, etc.] Or “in balances of righteousness”^{f1124}, even in the balance or strict justice, the justice of God; he was so conscious to himself that he had done no injustice to any man in his dealings with them, that, if weight of righteousness, which was to be, and was the rule of his conduct between man and man, was put into one scale, and his actions into another, the balance would be even, there would be nothing wanting, or, however, that would require any severe censure:

that God may know mine integrity; God did know his integrity, and bore a testimony to it, and to his retaining it, (^{<1833>}Job 2:3); but his meaning is, that should God strictly inquire into his life and conduct with respect to his dealings with men, as it would appear that he had lived in all good conscience to that day, so he doubted not but he would find his integrity such, that he would own and acknowledge it, approve of it, and commend it, and make it known to his friends and others, whereby he would be cleared of all those calumnies that were cast upon him. Some connect these words with the following, reading them affirmatively, “God knows mine

integrity”; he knows that my step has not turned out of the way of truth and righteousness; that my heart has not walked after mine eye, in lustful thoughts and desires; and that there is no spoil, nor rapine, nor violence in my hand, that I should deserve such a punishment as to sow, and another eat: thus Saphoro.

Ver. 7. *If my step hath turned out of the way*, etc.] The way of God, the way of his commandments, the good and right way, the way of truth and righteousness, so far as Job had knowledge of it: for, besides the law and light of nature the Gentiles had in common, good men had some revelation, and notions of the mind and will of God unto them, both before and after the flood, previous to the Mosaic dispensation; which in some measure directed them what way to walk in, with respect to worship and duty; and from this way Job swerved not; not that he walked so perfectly in it as to be free from sin, and never commit any; or that he never took a step out of the way, or stepped awry; but he did not knowingly, wittingly, and purposely turn out of the way; and when, through infirmity of the flesh, the temptations of Satan, and snares of the world, he was drawn aside, he did not obstinately and finally persist therein; though this may have respect not to sin in general, but to the particular sin he is clearing himself from, namely, dealing falsely and deceitfully with men, in whatsoever he had to do with them, in matters of “meum” and “tuum”; or with regard to the rules of justice and equity between man and man, he was not conscious to himself he had departed from them; a like expression to those in (^{197B}Psalm 7:3-5 44:18), where some particular sin is referred unto:

and mine heart walked after mine eyes; meaning not in the lust of uncleanness, of which he had spoken before, as such do whose eyes are full of adultery; but in the sin of covetousness, so Achan’s heart walked after his eyes, (^{197A}Joshua 7:20,21); and this is one of the three things the world is full of, and the men of it indulge themselves in, the lust of the eyes, (^{197C}1 John 2:16); the sense is, that when he saw the riches and wealth of others, he did not covet them, nor take any illicit methods to get them out of their hands; or, when he saw the goods they were possessed of, and had with them to dispose of, he did not take the advantage of their ignorance, or use any evil ways and means to cheat and beguile them of them: it is pleasing to the flesh for the heart to walk after the eye, or to indulge to that which it is taken with; but it is very vain and foolish, as well as very dangerous so to do, (^{210B}Ecclesiastes 2:10 11:9); a good man chooses a better guide than his eyes; even to be a follower of God, to tread in the steps of his living

Redeemer, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and according to the law and will of God:

and if any blot cleaved to my hands; any spot, stain, or blemish, as all sin is of a defiling nature, particularly the hands may be blotted by shedding innocent blood, by taking bribes to pervert judgment; which the Septuagint version directs to here; and by getting, holding, and retaining mammon of unrighteousness, or ill gotten goods; which is what is chiefly if not solely intended here; for it may be rendered, “if any thing hath cleaved”, etc. so Aben Ezra and Ben Gersom; for the word signifies both a “blot” and “anything”: and the Targum takes in both senses: the meaning seems to be, that there was not anything of another man’s in his hands, which he had taken from him by force and violence, or find obtained by any deceitful methods, and which he held fast, and it stuck with him as pitch to the hands, and he did not care to part with it, or restore it, whereby his hands were defiled; otherwise Job had no such opinion of the cleanness of his hands and actions, as if he thought there was no spot of sin in them, or only such as he could wash out himself; he clearly speaks the contrary, (^{<RB3>}Job 9:30,31); which is the sense of every good man, who, conscious of his spots and blemishes, washes his hands, his actions, his conversation garments, and makes them white in the blood of the Lamb; and such, and such only, have clean hands.

Ver. 8. [*Then let me sow, and another eat*, etc.] If what he had before said was not true; but he had turned out of the way of righteousness, and walked after the sight of his eyes, and the mammon of unrighteousness cleaved to his hands; then he wishes might sow his fields, and another enjoy the increase of them, which is one of God’s judgments threatened unto the wicked and disobedient, (^{<RB16>}Leviticus 26:16) (^{<RB33>}Deuteronomy 28:33);

let my offspring be rooted out; but Job had no offspring or children at this time to be rooted out or destroyed; they were all destroyed already; some think therefore that this imprecation was made by him in the time of his prosperity, though here repeated as it was then, he made a covenant with his eyes; but then this might have been improved against him and retorted on him, that so it was according to his wish; and therefore he must have been guilty of the sin he would have purged himself from; others suppose that he refers to the future, and to the offspring he hoped to have hereafter; and when he should have them, wishes they may be rooted out, if he had

done what he denies he had; but it does not appear that Job had any hope at all of being restored to his former state of prosperity, and of being possessed of a family and substance again, but the reverse. Gussetius ^{f1125} will have it, that he means his grandchildren; those indeed are sometimes called a man's children, and may propriety be said to be his offspring, they springing from him; and it is possible, that, as his sons were settled from him, they were married and had children; but this is not certain, or, if they had any, that these were not destroyed with them; wherefore it is best to take the word ^{f1126} in its first and literal sense, for what springs out of the earth, herbs, plants, and trees, as in (^{<2306>}Isaiah 42:5); so Ben Gersom and Bar Tzemach, and which best agrees with the phrase of being "rooted out", and with what goes before; that as he had wished that which was sown in his fields might be eaten up by another, so what was planted and grew up in his gardens, orchards, vineyards, and olive yards, and the like, might be quite rooted out and destroyed; if he was not the man he declared himself to be, or had wronged any of their goods and property, then this would have been a just retaliation of him.

Ver. 9. *If mine heart have been deceived by a woman*, etc.] By another man's wife, by wantonly looking at her beauty, and so lusting after her; and so, not through any blame or fault of hers, or by any artful methods made use of by her, to allure and ensnare; such as were practised by the harlot, (^{<2100>}Proverbs 7:1-27); but by neither was the heart of Job deceived, and drawn into the sin of uncleanness; for he had made a covenant with his eyes, as not to look at a virgin, so much less at another man's wife, to prevent his lusting after her; and whatever temptations and solicitations he might have been attended with, through the grace of God, as Joseph was, he was enabled to withstand them; though as wise a man, and the wisest of men, had his heart deceived and drawn aside thereby, (^{<2006>}Ecclesiastes 7:26);

or [if] I have laid wait at my neighbour's door: to meet with his wife there, and carry on an intrigue with her; or to take the opportunity of going in when opened, in order to solicit her to his embraces, knowing her husband to be away from home; (see ^{<2108>}Proverbs 5:8 7:8,19).

Ver. 10. *[Then] let my wife grind unto another*, etc.] Which some understand literally, of her being put to the worst of drudgery and slavery, to work at a mill, and grind corn for the service of a stranger, and be exposed to the company of the meanest of persons, and to their insults and

abuses; as we find such as were taken captives and made prisoners by an enemy were put unto, as Samson, (^{<0762>}Judges 16:21); and it may be observed, that to grind in a mill was also the work of women, (^{<0210>}Exodus 11:5 ^{<0241>}Matthew 24:41); as it was in early times; Homer ^{f1127} speaks of it as in times before him; but others take the words in a figurative sense, as if he imprecated that she lie with another man, and be defiled by him, as the Targum, Aben Ezra, and others ^{f1128}; (see ^{<2370>}Isaiah 47:1,2); and in like manner the following clause:

and let others bow down upon her; both which phrases are euphemisms, or clean and decent expressions, signifying what otherwise is not to be named; the Scriptures hereby directing, as to avoid unchaste thoughts, inclinations, and desires, and impure actions, so obscene words and filthy talking, as becometh saints: but there is some difficulty in Job's imprecating or wishing such a thing might befall his wife; it could not be lawful, if he had sinned, to wish his wife might sin also; or, if he was an adulterer, that she should be an adulteress; the sense is not, that Job really wished such a thing; but he uses such a way of speaking, to show how remote he was from the sin of uncleanness, there being nothing more disagreeable to a man than for his wife to defile his bed; it is the last thing he would wish for: and moreover Job suggests hereby, that had he been guilty of this sin, he must own and acknowledge that he would be righteously served, and it would be a just retaliation upon him, should his wife use him, or she be used, in such a manner; likewise, though a man may not wish nor commit a sin for the punishment of another; yet God sometimes punishes sin with sin, and even with the same kind of sin, and with this; so David's sin with Bathsheba was punished with Absalom lying with his wives and concubines before the sun, (^{<0021>}2 Samuel 12:11); (see ^{<0533>}Deuteronomy 28:30).

Ver. 11. *For this [is] an heinous crime*, etc.] Adultery; it is contrary to the light of nature, and is condemned by it as a great sin, (^{<0210>}Genesis 20:9 26:10); as well as contrary to the express will and law of God, (^{<0214>}Exodus 20:14); and, though all sin is a transgression of the law of God, and deserving of death; yet there are some sins greater and more heinous than others, being attended with aggravating circumstances; and such is this sin, it is a breach of the marriage contract and covenant between man and wife; it is doing injury to a man's property, and to that which is the nearest and dearest to him, and is what introduces confusion into families, kingdoms, and states; and therefore it follows:

yea, it [is] an iniquity [to he punished by] the judges; who might take cognizance of it, examine into it, and pass sentence for it, and execute it; and, if they neglect do their duty, God, the Judge of all the earth, will punish for it in the world to come, unless repented of: “for whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”, (^{<3804>}Hebrews 13:4); the punishment of adultery was death by the law of God, and that by stoning, as appears from (^{<1800>}Leviticus 20:10 ^{<6221>}Deuteronomy 22:21 ^{<4804>}John 8:4,5); and it is remarkable, that the Heathens, who were ignorant of this law, enjoined the same punishment for it; so Homer ^{f1129} introduces Hector reproving Paris for this sin, and suggests to him, that if he had his deserved punishment, he would have been clothed with a “stone coat”, as he beautifully expresses it; which Suidas ^{f1130} explains, by being overwhelmed with stones, or stoned; as Eustathius ^{f1131}.

Ver. 12. *For it [is] a fire [that] consumeth to destruction*, etc.] Referring either to the nature of the sin of uncleanness; it is inflammatory, a burning lust, a fire burning in the breast; (see ^{<4100>}1 Corinthians 7:9); or to the effect of it, either the rage of jealousy in the injured person, which is exceeding fierce, furious, and cruel, like devouring fire, not to be appeased or mitigated, (^{<2064>}Proverbs 6:34,35 ^{<2186>}Song of Solomon 8:6); or else it may respect the punishment of this sin in the times of Job, and which we find was practised among the Gentiles, as the Canaanites, Job’s neighbours, burning such delinquents with fire; (see ^{<01334>}Genesis 38:24) (^{<2437>}Jeremiah 29:22,23); or rather the wrath of God for it, which is poured forth as fire, and burns to the lowest hell, and into which lake of fire all such impure persons will be cast, unless the grace of God prevents; and which will be a fire that will consume and destroy both soul and body, and so be an utter and everlasting destruction, (^{<6208>}Revelation 21:8);

and would root out all my increase; even in this world; adultery is a sin that not only ruins a man’s character, fixes an indelible blot upon him, a reproach that shall not be wiped off, and consumes a man’s body, and destroys the health of it, but his substance also, the increase of his fields, and of his fruits, and by means of it a man is brought to a piece of bread, to beg it, and to be glad of it, (^{<2066>}Proverbs 6:26,33 5:10).

Ver. 13. *If I did despise the cause of my manservant, or of my maidservant*, etc.] Whether it was a cause that related to any controversy or quarrel among themselves when it was brought before him, he did not reject it, because of the meanness of the contending parties, and the state

of servitude they were in; but he received it and searched into it, heard patiently what each had to say, examined them thoroughly, entered into the merits of the cause, and either reconciled them, or passed a righteous sentence, punished the delinquent, and protected the innocent; or, if it was a cause relating to himself, any complaint of their work, or wages, or food, or clothing, as it seems to be from what follows:

when they contended with me; had anything to complain of, or to object to him on the above account, or any other, where there was any show or colour of foundation for it; otherwise it cannot be thought he would indulge a saucy, impudent, and contradicting behaviour in them towards him: masters in those times and countries had an unlimited, and exercised a despotic power over their servants, and used them with great rigour, and refused to do them justice upon complaints; but Job behaved as if he had had the rules of the apostle before him to act by in his conduct towards his servants, (~~400~~Ephesians 6:9 ~~5100~~Colossians 4:1); and even condescended to submit the cause between him and his servants to other judges or arbitrators, or rather took cognizance of it himself, heard patiently and carefully what they had to allege, and did them justice.

Ver. 14. *What then shall I do when God riseth up?* etc.] That is, if he had despised and rejected the cause of his servants, or had neglected, or refused to do them justice; he signifies he should be at the utmost loss to know what to do, what excuse to make, or what to say in his own defence, when God should rise up to defend the cause of the injured; either in a way of Providence in this life, or at the great day of judgment in the world to come, when everything will be brought to account, and masters and servants must stand alike before the judgment seat of God, to receive for the things they have done, whether good or evil:

and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? when he makes a visitation among men, either in this world, even in a fatherly way, visits transgressions, and reproveth and corrects for them; had he been guilty of ill usage of his servants, he must have silently submitted to such visitations and chastisements, having nothing to say for himself why he should not be thus dealt with; or in the world to come, in the great day of visitation, when God shall make inquisition for sin, and seek it out, and call to an account for it; and should this be produced against him, even contempt of the cause of his servants, he was sensible he could not answer him for it, nor for anyone sin of a thousand, as no man will be able to do; but must be

speechless, unless he has a better righteousness than his own to answer for him in that time to come. This is Job's first reason which deterred him from using his servants ill; another follows.

Ver. 15. *Did not he that made me in the womb make him?* etc.] And her also, both his manservant and maidservant: these were made, by the Lord as Job was, and in a like place and manner as he himself; though parents are the instruments of begetting children, and of bringing them into the world, God is the Maker of men, as at the beginning, and all are alike made by him, in whatsoever rank, condition, and circumstance of life, whether masters or servants; and they are all fabricated in the same shop of nature, the womb of a woman:

and did not one fashion us in the womb? that is, he who is the one God, according to (³⁹²⁰Malachi 2:10); God is one in nature and essence, though there are three Persons in the unity of the Godhead; and this one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is the Creator of all men and things; hence we read of "Creators", (²¹³³Ecclesiastes 12:1); and, though one God makes the bodies and creates the souls of men now as at the first, and all are formed and fashioned by him, high, low, rich and poor, bond and free; and they have all the same rational powers and faculties of soul, (⁴⁹⁸⁵Psalm 33:15); as well as the same curious art and skill are employed in forming and fashioning their bodies and the members of them, in the lower parts of the earth, in their mother's womb; yea, they are fashioned "in one womb" ^{f1132}, as the words will better bear to be rendered according to the position of them in the original and the accents; not indeed in the same identical womb, but in a like one: there are two words in the original here, both translated "womb"; the one signifies the "ovarium", in which the conception is made; the other designs the "secundine", in which the fetus is wrapped or covered; for so it may be rendered, "did he not cover us?" etc. ^{f1133}; though Jarchi, Aben Ezra, Ben Gersom, and others, interpret it of the one God as we do: Job's reasoning is, that seeing he and his servants were equally the workmanship of God, and both made in the womb by him, and curiously fashioned alike, and possessed of the same rational powers, it would be unreasonable in him to use them ill, who were his fellow creatures; and should he, he might expect the Maker of them both would highly resent it. Macrobius ^{f1134}, an Heathen writer, gives a remarkable instance of the care heaven, as he expresses it, has of servants, and how much the contempt of it is resented thereby; and reasons much in the same manner concerning them as Job does here, that they are men, though

servants; are of the same original, breathe in the same air, live and die as other men.

Ver. 16. *If I have withheld the poor from [their] desire*, etc.] Their reasonable desires, and which it was in his power to grant; as when they desired a piece of bread, being hungry, or clothes to cover them, being naked; but not unreasonable desires, seeking and asking great things for themselves, or unlimited and unbounded ones, such as the two sons of Zebedee desired of Christ, (^{<4118>}Mark 10:35);

or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; through long waiting for, and expecting help and succour from him, and at last disappointed. Job did not use the widow in such a manner as to give her reason to hope for relief or counsel from him she came for, and make her wait long, and then send her away empty, as he was charged, (^{<48219>}Job 22:9); but he soon dispatched her, by granting her what she sued to him for.

Ver. 17. *Or have eaten my morsel myself alone*, etc.] Though he had kept no doubt a plentiful table in the time of his prosperity suitable to his circumstances, yet had been no luxurious person, and therefore calls provisions a “morsel”; however, be it what it would, more or less, he did not eat it alone; what he had for himself the poor had a share of it with him, and the same he ate himself he gave to them:

and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof: meaning the poor fatherless: for as to the rich fatherless, it was no charity to feed them: this verse contradicts the charge exhibited against him, (^{<48217>}Job 22:7).

Ver. 18. *For from my youth he was brought up with me as [with] a father*, etc.] That is, the poor or the fatherless, one or both; as soon as he was at years of discretion, and was capable of observing the distressed circumstances of others, he had a tender and compassionate regard to the poor and fatherless, and acted the part of a father to them; was as affectionately concerned for them as if he had been their father, and took such care of them as if they were his children; (see ^{<48216>}Job 29:16);

and I have guided her from my mother's womb; the widow, by his counsel and advice; an hyperbolical expression, signifying how early he was a succourer of such persons, by giving his friendly advice, or needful assistance; the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “from my youth mercy grew up with me”, etc. a merciful disposition, a compassionate regard to the poor and fatherless; this was as it were connatural to him; for though

there is no good disposition really in man, without the grace of God, of which Job might early partake, yet there is a show of it in some persons, in comparison of others; some have a natural tender disposition to the poor, when others are naturally cruel and hardhearted to them; and so Mr. Broughton renders the words to this sense,

“for from my youth this grew with me as a father, and from my mother did I tender it:”

but the first sense seems best.

Ver. 19. *If I have seen any perish for want of clothing*, etc.] A man may be in such poor circumstances as to want proper clothing to cover his naked body with, and preserve it from the inclemencies of the weather, and for want of it be ready to perish or die with cold. Job denies he had seen any such; not that he had never seen persons in such perishing circumstances; but he had not seen them as to “despise” them, as the Vulgate Latin version, as to have them in contempt, or look at them with disdain because of their poverty and rags, or sordid apparel; or so as to “overlook” them, as the Septuagint version, to neglect them, and to take no notice of them, and make no provision for their clothing, a warm and comfortable garment, as in (^{<18312>}Job 31:20):

or any poor without covering; without clothing sufficient to cover himself with, and keep him warm; Job had seen such objects, but he did not leave them in such a condition; he saw them, and had compassion on them, and clothed them.

Ver. 20. *If his loins have not blessed me*, etc.] Which were girded and covered with garments he gave him; which, as often as he put on and girded his loins with, put him in mind of his generous benefactor, and this put him upon sending up an ejaculatory wish to heaven, that all happiness and blessedness might attend him, who had so comfortably clothed him; (see ^{<18293>}Job 29:13);

and [if] he were [not] warmed with the fleece of my sheep; not with a fleece of wool as taken off the back of the sheep, or with a sheep’s skin, having the wool on it, but with it, as made up into cloth; with a woollen garment, which was a kind of clothing that very early obtained, and is what is warm and comfortable, (see ^{<18211>}Deuteronomy 22:11). Job clothed the naked, not with gay apparel, which was not necessary, but with decent and useful raiment, and not with the fleece of other men’s sheep, but with the

fleece of his own sheep, or with cloth made of the wool of his own flock, giving what was his own and not others; which always should be observed in acts of charity; (see ^{<1034>}2 Samuel 12:4). Thus Christ, the antitype of Job, feeds the poor and the fatherless whom he finds, though he does not leave them so; it is at his own table, and with his own bread, with provisions of his own making; and clothes them with the robe of his righteousness, and garments of salvation, which is a clothing and a covering to them, and secures them from perishing, and causes joy and gladness in them, (^{<2310>}Isaiah 61:10).

Ver. 21. *If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless*, etc.] Either in a menacing way, threatening what he would do to them; which, from a man of wealth and authority, a civil magistrate, a judge, is very terrible to the poor and fatherless; or in order to strike him, which would be to smite with the fist of wickedness; or give a signal to others, by lifting up the hand to smite, as Ananias gave orders to smite the Apostle Paul; or thereby to give his vote against the fatherless wrongly, suffrages being sometimes made by lifting up the hands; or hereby Job signifies, that he was so far from doing the fatherless any real injury, that he had not so much as lifted up his hand, and even a finger against him:

when I saw my help in the gate; in the court of judicature held in the gate of the city, as was usual; though he knew he had the bench of judges for him, or they would give sentence in his behalf, and against the fatherless, if he did but hold up his hand, or lift up a finger to them, so ready would they be take his part and be on his side; yet he never made use of his power and interest to their detriment, or took such an advantage against them.

Ver. 22. *[Then] let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade*, etc.] With which the upper part of it is connected; let it be disjoined from it, or rot and drop off from it; a dreadful calamity this, to lose an arm and the use of it, to have it full off immediately, as a judgment from God, and in just retaliation for lifting up an hand or arm against the fatherless; as Jeroboam's arm withered when he put it forth from the altar, and ordered hands to be laid upon the prophet for crying against the altar, (^{<1134>}1 Kings 13:4); and mine arm be broken from the bone; from the channel bone, as the margin of our Bibles, or rather from the elbow, the lower part of the arm and so may be rendered, "or mine arm", etc. Eliphaz had brought a charge against Job, that the arms of the fatherless had been broken, and suggests that they had been broken by him, or by his orders, (^{<8210>}Job 22:9);

and Job here wishes, that if that was the case, that his own arm was broken: such imprecations are not to be made in common, or frequently, and only when a man's innocence cannot be vindicated but by an appeal to the omniscient God; an instance somewhat like this, see in (^{<BIB>}Psalm 137:5,6).

Ver. 23. *For destruction [from] God [was] a terror to me*, etc.] Though he feared not men, they being at his beck and command, ready to do any thing for him he should order, yet he feared God; and the dread of his resentment, and of destruction from him the lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy, had such an influence on him as to deter and keep him from all unkindness to the poor, and in justice to the fatherless; he dreaded the destruction of himself, his family, and substance in this world, and everlasting destruction of soul and body in the world to come; which of all things is to be feared, (^{<BIB>}Matthew 10:28); and Old Testament saints were much under a spirit of bondage to fear, and were actuated thereby; and, though Job might not be under any dread of eternal damnation, knowing his interest in the living Redeemer; yet he might fear temporal destruction, as it is certain he did; which thing he feared came upon him, though not for any crime or crimes he was guilty of, (see ^{<BIB>}Job 30:25); he might fear, as a good man may, the chastisements and corrections of his heavenly Father:

and by reason of his highness I could not endure; God is higher than the highest angels, or men; he is above all gods, so called; he is God over all, blessed for ever; and such is his height, his glory, and his majesty, that it is terrible, and the dread of them makes men afraid; nor can any sinner stand before him, nor withstand him, nor hope to prevail against him, nor flee from his presence, nor escape out of his hand, nor bear his wrath and indignation, and the coming down of his arm; for what hands can be strong, or heart endure, when the almighty God deals with them? or Job's sense may be, that such an awe of the divine Being was always upon him, that he could not do any unkind thing to the poor, or unjust one to the fatherless.

Ver. 24. *If I have made gold my hope*, etc.] Job here purges himself from idolatry in a figurative sense, as he afterwards does from it, taken in a literal sense; for covetousness is idolatry, and a covetous man is an idolater; he worships his gold and silver, placing his affections on them, and putting his trust and confidence in them, (^{<BIB>}Ephesians 5:5 ^{<BIB>}Colossians 3:5); for to make gold the object or ground of hope is to

place it in the room of God, who is the Hope of Israel, and in whom every good man should trust, and whom he should make his hope, (^{<3148>}Jeremiah 14:8 17:13); not gold on earth, but glory in heaven, is what the good man is hoping for; and not riches, but Christ and his righteousness, are the foundation of such an hope; to make gold our hope, is to have hope in this life, and to make a thing present the object of it; whereas true hope is of things not seen and future, and if only in this life good men have hope, they are of all most miserable; but they have in heavens better and a more enduring substance, and a better ground for hope of that substance, than worldly wealth and riches can give:

or have said to the fine gold, [thou art] my confidence; as bad men do, and good men are prone unto, and therefore to be cautioned against it, (^{<4906>}Psalm 49:6 52:7 ^{<5167>}1 Timothy 6:17); for this is not only to trust in uncertain riches, and in unsatisfying ones, but to put them in the stead of God, who is or ought to be the confidence of the ends of the earth: not gold, but the living God, who gives all things richly to enjoy, is to be trusted in; when men covet riches, and trust in them as their security from evil, and that they may live independent of the providence of God, it is virtually to deny it, and carries in it secret atheism; as well as such a confidence is destruction of the worship of God, and such a temper makes a man an unprofitable hearer, plunges him into errors and hurtful lusts, and endangers his everlasting happiness, (^{<8109>}Habakkuk 2:9 ^{<1132>}Matthew 13:22 ^{<5409>}1 Timothy 6:9,10 ^{<1101>}Mark 10:24); in later times the Romans worshipped the goddess “Pecunia”, or money, as Austin ^{f1135} relates.

Ver. 25. *If I rejoiced because my wealth [was] great,* etc.] As it was, (see ^{<8002>}Job 1:2,3); yet he did not set his heart upon it, please himself with it, indulge to a carnal joy on account of it, nor suffer it to engross his affections, or alienate them from God his chief joy; not but that a man may lawfully rejoice in the goodness of God unto him, in increasing his wealth, and praise him for it, who has placed him in such easy circumstances, and so comfortably provided for him and his family, and put him into a capacity to do good to others; and he may rejoice in what God has given him, and cheerfully partake of it, (^{<1393>}1 Chronicles 29:13,14 ^{<1627>}Deuteronomy 12:7 ^{<2059>}Ecclesiastes 5:19, 20);

and because my hand had gotten much; though he had much wealth, he did not ascribe it to his own industry, and applaud his own wisdom and diligence, as men are apt to do, for all comes of God, and is owing to his

blessing; he did not please himself when become rich, as if his own hand had found him much substance, as Ephraim did, (^{<2818>}Hosea 12:8).

Ver. 26. *If I beheld the sun when it shined*, etc.] Some take this to be a reason why Job did not make gold his hope and confidence, because all sublunary and earthly enjoyments must be uncertain, fading, and perish, since the sun and moon are not without their deficiencies and changes, to which sense the Septuagint version inclines; others, as Nachmanides, that they are a denial that Job ascribed his wealth and substance to the influence of the heavenly bodies; and many interpreters are of opinion that they are a continuation of the same subject as before; Job hereby declaring that neither his eye nor his heart were set upon his outward prosperity, comparable to the light of the sun, and the brightness of the moon; that he did not secretly please himself with it, nor congratulate himself upon it nor applaud his own wisdom and industry; and of late Schultens and others interpret it of flattering great personages, complimenting: them, and courting their favour, which we call worshipping the rising sun; but I rather think it is to be understood, as it more generally is, of worshipping the sun and moon in a literal sense; which was the first kind of idolatry men went into; those very ancient idolaters, the Zabii, worshipped the sun as their greater god, as Maimonides ^{f1136} observes, to whom he says they offered seven bats, seven mice, and seven other creeping things, with some other things also; in later times horses were offered to it, (see ^{<2231>}2 Kings 23:11). So the ancient Egyptians worshipped the sun and moon, calling the one Osiris, and the other Isis ^{f1137}. The word for sun is “light”, and it is so called because it is a luminous body, and the fountain of light to others; it is called the greater light, (^{<0016>}Genesis 1:16); and from this Hebrew word “or”, with the Egyptians, Apollo, who is the sun, is called Horus, as Macrobius ^{f1138} relates; it is said to “shine”, as it always does, even when below our horizon, or in an eclipse, or under a cloud, though not seen by us. Job has here respect to its shining clearly and visibly, and perhaps at noon day, when it is in its full strength; unless regard is had to its bright and shining appearance at its rising, when the Heathens used to pay their homage and adoration to it ^{f1139}: now when Job denies that he beheld it shining, it cannot be understood of the bare sight of it, which he continually had; nor of beholding it with delight and pleasure, which might be very lawfully done, (^{<2107>}Ecclesiastes 11:7); nor of considering it as the work of God, being a very glorious and useful creature, in which his glory is displayed, and for which he is to be praised, because of its beneficial influence on the

earth; (see ^{<198B>}Psalm 8:3,4 19:1 136:1,7 ^{<1534>}Deuteronomy 33:14); but of his beholding it with admiration, as if it was more than a creature, ascribing deity to it, and worshipping it as God; and the same must be understood of the moon in the next clause:

or the moon walking [in] brightness; as at first rising, or rather when in the full, in the middle of the month, as Aben Ezra; when it walks all night, in its brightness, illuminated by the sun: these two luminaries, the one called the king, the other the queen of heaven, were very early worshipped, if not the first instances of idolatry. Diodorus Siculus ^{f1140} says, that the first men of old, born in Egypt, beholding and admiring the beauty of the world, thought there were two gods in the nature of the universe, and that they were eternal; namely, the sun and moon, the one they called Osiris, and the other Isis; hence the Israelites, having dwelt long in Egypt, were in danger of being drawn into this idolatry, against which they are cautioned, (^{<194B>}Deuteronomy 4:19); and where was a city called Heliopolis, or the city of the sun, as in the Greek version of (^{<239B>}Isaiah 19:18); where was a temple dedicated to the worship of it; and so the Arabians, the neighbours of Job, according to Herodotus ^{f1141}, worshipped the sun and moon; for he says the Persians were taught by them and the Assyrians to sacrifice to the sun and moon; and so did the old Canaanites and the Phoenicians; hence one of their cities is called Bethshemesh, the house or temple of the sun, (^{<162>}Joshua 19:22), yea, we are told ^{f1142}, that to this day there are some traces of this ancient idolatry in Arabia, the neighbourhood of Job; as in a large city in Arabia, upon the Euphrates, called Anna, where they worship the sun only; this being common in those parts in Job's time, he purges himself from it.

Ver. 27. *And mine heart hath been secretly enticed*, etc.] Drawn away by beholding the magnitude of these bodies, the swiftness of their motion, their glorious appearance, and great usefulness to mankind, to entertain a thought of their being deities; and privately to worship them, in secret acts of devotion, as by an honourable esteem of them as such, reverence and affection for them, trust and confidence in them; for, as there is a secret worshipping of the true God, so there is a secret idolatry, idolatry in the heart, and setting up of idols there, as well as worshipping them in dark places, in chambers of imagery, as the Jews did, (^{<182>}Ezekiel 8:12);

or my mouth hath kissed my hand; idols used to be kissed by their votaries, in token of their veneration of them, and as expressive of their worship of

them; so Baal and Jeroboam's calves were kissed by the worshippers of them, (^{<11918>}1 Kings 19:18 ^{<2812>}Hosea 13:2). Kissing is used to signify the religious veneration, homage, and worship of a divine Person, the Son of God, (^{<1012>}Psalms 2:12); and such deities especially that were out of the reach of their worshippers, as the sun, moon, and stars were, they used to put their hands to their mouths, and kiss them, in token of their worship; just as persons now, at a distance from each other, pay their civil respects to one another: instances of religious adoration of idols performed in this manner, (see Gill on "^{<2812>}Hosea 13:2"). Job denies that he had been guilty of such idolatry, either secretly or openly.

Ver. 28. *This also [were] an iniquity [to be punished by] the judge*, etc.] As well as adultery, (^{<18311>}Job 31:11); by the civil magistrates and judges of the earth, who are God's vicegerents, and therefore it behooves them to take cognizance of such an iniquity, and to punish for it, which affects in so peculiar a manner the honour and worship of the true God; this by the law of Moses was punished by stoning to death, (^{<1513>}Deuteronomy 13:9); however this will be taken notice of and punished by God the Judge of all, whose law is broken hereby, and who will visit this iniquity more especially on those who commit it, and their posterity after them. Idolaters of every sort shall have their part and portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, (^{<02118>}Exodus 20:3-5 ^{<6218>}Revelation 21:8); the consideration of its being such a heinous sin, and so deserving of punishment, deterred Job from it; the Targum paraphrases it, a most amazing iniquity, it being, as follows, a denial of the true God:

for I should have denied the God [that is] above; that is, had he worshipped the sun and moon secretly or openly; for, as the atheist denies him in words, the idolater denies him in facts, worshipping the creature besides the Creator, and giving his glory to another, and his praise to idols; which is a virtual denial of him, even of him who is above the sun and moon in place, being higher than the heavens; and in nature, excellency, and glory, being the Creator of them, and they his creatures; and in power and authority, who commands the sun, and it rises not, and has appointed the moon for seasons, (^{<1807>}Job 9:7 ^{<19419>}Psalms 104:19).

Ver. 29. *If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me*, etc.] Job, though a good man, had his enemies, as all good men have, and that because of their goodness, and who hated him with an implacable hatred, without a cause, there being a rooted bitter enmity in the seed of the

serpent against the godly in all generations; on whom sooner or later, at one time or another, destruction comes, one calamity or another on their families, diseases on their bodies, loss of substance, death of themselves or relatives; now it is a common thing with wicked men to rejoice in the adversity of their enemies, but good men should not do so; yet it is a difficult thing, and requires a large measure of grace, and that in exercise, not to feel any pleasing emotion, a secret joy and inward pleasure, at the hearing of anything of this sort befalling an enemy; which is a new crime Job purges himself from:

or lifted up myself when evil found him; either the evil of sin, which sooner or later finds out the sinner, charges him with guilt, and requires punishment, or the evil of punishment for sin; which, though it may seem to move slowly, pursues the sinner, and will overtake him, and light upon him. Mr. Broughton renders the words, “and bestirred me when he found loss”: loss in his family, in his cattle, and in his substance; now, when this was the case, Job did not raise up himself in a haughty manner, and insult and triumph over him, or stir up himself to joy and rejoicing, or to make joyful motions, as Aben Ezra and Ben Gersom interpret it; and by his gestures show that he was elated with the evil that had befallen his enemy; indeed so far as the fall and destruction of the wicked make for the public good, for the interest of religion, for the glory of God, and the honour of his justice, it is lawful for good men to rejoice thereat; but not from a private affection, or from a private spirit of revenge, (see ~~19830~~ Psalm 58:10,11) (~~21110~~ Proverbs 11:10 ~~61820~~ Revelation 18:20 19:1,2).

Ver. 30. *Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin*, etc.] Which, as it is the instrument of speech, is often the means of much sin; particularly of cursing men, and expressing much bitterness against enemies; but Job laid an embargo upon it, kept it as with a bridle, restrained it from uttering any evil, or wishing any to his worst adversaries; which is difficult to do, when provocations are given, as follows:

by wishing a curse to his soul; not to his soul as distinct from his body, being the superior excellency and immortal part; that it be everlastingly damned, as wicked men wish to their own souls, and the souls of others, but to his person, wishing some calamity might befall him, some disease seize upon him, or that God would take him away by death: Job would never suffer himself to wish anything of this kind unto his enemy.

Ver. 31. *If the men of my tabernacle*, etc.] Either his friends, that came to visit him, and take a meal with him, and would sometimes tarry awhile with him in his house, being very free and familiar with him; and who were, as it were, at home in his tabernacle; or rather his domestic servants, that were under his roof, and dwelt in his house, (see ^{<8895>}Job 19:15); if these

said not, oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied; of the flesh of Job's enemy; and the sense is that his servants used to say, are cannot bear to see our master so ill used and insulted by his enemy; we wish he would only allow us to avenge him on him, we would eat him up alive; we would devour him, and destroy him at once; nor can we be satisfied unless we have leave to do it: and so this is a further proof of Job's patience with his enemies, that though he had fetters on in his family, his servants solicited him to revenge, yet he abstained from it; which may be exemplified in the cases of David and of Christ, (^{<9208>}1 Samuel 26:8 ^{<1069>}2 Samuel 16:9 ^{<9354>}Luke 9:54), though some think these words express Job's patience towards his servants, who were so angry with him for the strict discipline he observed in his house, that they wished they had his flesh to eat, and could not be satisfied without it; and yet, so far was he from taking pleasure in the calamities of his enemies, and wishing ill to them, that he did not resent the ill natured speeches of his servants, and avenge himself on them for their wicked insults upon him: but it can hardly be thought that Job would keep such wicked servants in his house; but perhaps Job here enters upon a new crime, which he clears himself of, and is opened more fully in (^{<8892>}Job 31:32), namely, inhospitality to strangers; since the particle "if" commonly begins a new article in this chapter, and being taken in this sense, various interpretations are given; some, as if Job's servants were displeased with him for his hospitality, that his house was always so full of guests, that they were continually employed in dressing food for them, that they had not time, or that there was not enough left for them to eat of his flesh, his food, and be satisfied with it; or else, as pleased with the plentiful table he kept, and therefore desired to continue always in his service, and eat of his food; nor could they be satisfied with the food of others, or live elsewhere; though perhaps it is best of all to render the words, as by some, who will give, or show the man "that is not satisfied of his flesh?" ^{f1143} point out the man in all the neighbourhood that has not been liberally entertained at Job's table to his full satisfaction and content; and his liberality did not extend only to his neighbours, but to strangers also; as follows.

Ver. 32. *The stranger did not lodge in the street*, etc.] By a stranger is not meant an unconverted man, that is a stranger to God and godliness, to Christ, and the way of salvation by him, to the Spirit of God and spiritual things, nor a good man, who is a stranger and pilgrim on earth; but one that is out of his nation and country, and at a distance from it, whether a good man or a bad man; these Job would not suffer to lie in the streets in the night season, exposed to the air and the inclemencies of it; (see ^{<0795>}Judges 19:15-21);

[*but*] *I opened my doors to the traveller*; even all the doors of his house, to denote his great liberality, that as many as would might enter it; and this was done by himself, or, however, by his order; and some think that it signifies that he was at his door, waiting and watching for travellers to invite them in, as Abraham and Lot, (^{<0180>}Genesis 18:1,2 19:1,2); or his doors were opened “to the way” ^{f1144}: as it may be rendered, to the roadside; his house was built by the wayside; or, however, the doors which lay towards that side were thrown open for travellers to come in at as they pleased, and when they would; so very hospitable and kind to strangers and travellers was Job, and so welcome were they to his house and the entertainment of it, (see ^{<3810>}Hebrews 13:2).

Ver. 33. *If I covered my transgressions as Adam*, etc.] Job could not be understood, by this account he had given of the holiness of his life, that he thought himself quite free from sin; he had owned himself to be a sinner in several places before, and disclaimed perfection; and here he acknowledges he was guilty of transgressing the law of God, and that in many instances; for he speaks of his “transgressions” in the plural number; but then he did not seek to cover them from the of God or men, but frankly and ingenuously confessed them to both; he did not cover them, palliate, excuse, and extenuate them, as Adam did his, by laying the blame to his wife; and as she by charging it on the serpent; and those excuses they made are the inventions they found out, (^{<2072>}Ecclesiastes 7:29); or the meaning is, Job did not do “as men” ^{f1145} in common do; who, when they have sinned, either through fear or shame, endeavour to conceal it, and keep it out of the sight of others, unless they are very hardened and audacious sinners, such as the men of Sodom were, (see ^{<3807>}Hosea 6:7);

by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom; meaning perhaps some particular iniquity which his nature was most inclined to; this he did not attempt to hide in secret, as what is put into the bosom is; or that he did not spare it

and cherish it, and, from an affection to it, keep it as persons and things beloved are, laid in the bosom; and so Mr. Broughton reads the words, “hiding my sin of a self-love”; either having a self-love to it, or hiding it of self-love, that is, from a principle of self-love, to preserve his honour, credit, and reputation among men.

Ver. 34. *Did I fear a great multitude?* etc.] No, they did not deter him from confessing his sin in the most public manner, when sensible or convicted of it, and when such a public acknowledgment was necessary:

or did the contempt of families terrify me? no, the contempt he might suppose he should be had in by some families that knew him, and he was well acquainted with, did not terrify him from making a free and ingenuous confession of his sins:

that I kept silence; or “did I keep silence”,

[and] went not out of the door? so as not to open his mouth by confession in public, but kept within doors through fear and shame; or else the sense is, that he was not intimidated from doing his duty as a civil magistrate, administering justice to the poor and oppressed; neither the dread of a clamorous mob, nor the contempt of families of note, or great personages, could deter him from the execution of his office with uprightness, so as to cause him to be silent, and keep at home; but without any regard to the fear of the one, or the contempt of the other, he went out from his house through the street to the court of judicature, took his place on the bench, and gave judgment in favour of those that were oppressed, though the multitude was against them, and even persons and families of note: or thus, though I could have put a great multitude to fear, yet the most contemptible persons in any family, so Aben Ezra and Ben Gersom interpret that phrase, the meanest person, or but a beggar, if his cause was just, terrified him; or such was the fear of God upon him, that he durst do no other than to do him justice; so that he could not open his mouth against him, or stir out of doors to do him the tease; injury; though perhaps it may be best of all, with Schultens, to consider these words as an imprecation, that if what he had said before from (~~183124~~ Job 31:24) was not true; if he was not clear from idolatry figurative, and literal, from a malicious and revengeful spirit, from inhospitality and unkindness to strangers, from palliating, excusing, and extenuating his sins; then as if he should say, may I be frightened with a tumult, or a multitude of people, and terrified with the public contempt of families; may I be as silent as a mope

in my own house, and never dare to stir out of doors, or show my thee, or see face of any man any more: and then, before he had quite finished his account of himself, breaks out in the following manner.

Ver. 35. *Oh, that one would hear me!* etc.] Or, “who will give me a hearer?”^{f1146} Oh, that I had one! not a nearer of him as a teacher and instructor of many, as he had been, (^{<1804>}Job 4:3); or only to hear what he had delivered in this chapter; but to hear his cause, and hear him plead his own cause in a judiciary way; he does not mean an ordinary hearer, one that, comes out of curiosity into courts of judicature to hear causes tried, what is said on both sides, and how they will issue; but, as Bar Tzemach paraphrases it,

“who shall give me a judge that shall hear me,”

that would hear his cause patiently, examine it thoroughly, and judge impartially, which is the business of judges to do, (^{<1816>}Deuteronomy 1:16,17); he did not care who it was, if he had but such an one; though he seems to have respect to God himself, from what he says in the next clause, and wishes that he would but hear, try, and judge his cause:

behold, my desire [is, that] the Almighty would answer me: answer to what he had said, or had further to say in his own defence; this is a request he had made before, and now repeats it, (see ^{<1832>}Job 13:22 23:3,4,5); some render it, “behold my mark”, or “scope”^{f1147}; so Mr. Broughton, “behold my scope in this”; this is what I aim at, what I design and mean by wishing for an hearer, that the Almighty himself would take the cause in hand, and give me an answer: or, “behold my sign”^{f1148}; the sign of my innocence, appealing to God, leaving my cause to be heard, tried, and judged by him, who is my witness, and will answer for me; (see ^{<1849>}Job 16:19); as well as desiring mine adversary to put down in writing what he has against me; or, “behold my signature”^{f1149}; the plea I have given is signed by my own hand: now “let the Almighty answer me”; a bold expression indeed, and a making too free with the Almighty, and was one of those speeches Job was to be blamed for, and for which he was after humbled and repented of:

and [that] mine adversary had written a book; or “the man of my contention”^{f1150}: either that contended for him, as Aben Ezra, that pleaded for him, was his advocate in court, whom he would have take a brief of him, and so distinctly plead his cause; or rather that contended against him, a court adversary, by whom he means either his three friends, or some one

of them, whom he more especially took for his enemy; (see ~~316~~ Job 16:9-11); and who he wishes had brought a bill of indictment, and put down in a book, on a paper in writing, the charge he had against him; that so it might be clearly known what could be alleged against him; and that it might be particularly and distinctly examined; when he doubted not but he should be able to give a full answer to every article in it; and that the very bill itself would carry in it a justification of him: or it may be, rather he means God himself, who carried it towards him as an adversary, at least in a providential way; he had before requested that he would show him wherefore he contended with him, (~~316~~ Job 10:2); and now he desires he would give in writing his charge against him, being fully confident, that if he had but the opportunity of answering to it before him, he should be able sufficiently to vindicate himself; and that he should come off with honour, as follows.

Ver. 36. *Surely I would take it upon my shoulder*, etc.] The bill of indictment, the charge in writing; this he would take up and carry on his shoulder as a very light thing, having nothing weighty in it, no charge of sin and guilt to bear him down; nothing but what he could easily stand up under, only some trifling matter, which could not be interpreted sin; for anything of that kind would have been a burden too heavy for him to have borne: or else his sense is, that should he be convicted of any sin, he would openly confess the charge, acknowledge the sin in the most public manner, that being visible which is borne upon the shoulder; and would also patiently bear the afflictions and chastisements that were laid upon him for it: though rather the meaning is, that he should take up and carry such a bill, not as a burden, but as an honour, as one bears a sword of state, or carries a sceptre as an ensign of royalty on his shoulder; to which the allusion may be in (~~2306~~ Isaiah 9:6); not at all doubting but it would turn out to his glory; which is confirmed by what follows;

[and] bind it [as] a crown to me, or “crowns”^{f1151}, having various circles of gold hung with jewels; signifying that he would not only take his bill or charge, and carry it on his shoulder, but put it on his head, and wear it there, as a king does his crown; which is an ornament and honour to him, as he should reckon this bill, seeing it would give him an opportunity of clearing himself effectually.

Ver. 37. *I would declare to him the number of my steps*, etc.] To his judge, or to him that contended with him, and drew up the bill against him; he

would forward it, assist in it, furnish materials for it, give an account of all the transactions of his life that he could remember; this he says not as though he thought that God stood in need of any such declaration, since he better knows the actions of men than they themselves, compasses their paths, and is acquainted with all their ways; but to show how confident he was of his innocence, and how little he feared the strictest and closest examination of his ways and works, knowing that he had lived with all good conscience unto that day:

and as a prince would I go near unto him; either he should consider such an hearer and judge of his cause he desired as a prince, and reverence and respect him as such; he should be as dear unto him, though his adversary that contended with him, as a prince; and he should be as ambitious of an acquaintance with him as with a prince: or rather he means that he himself as a prince, in a princely manner, and with a princely spirit, should draw nigh to his judge, to answer to the bill in writing against him; that he should not come up to the bar like a malefactor, that shows guilt in his countenance, and by his trembling limbs, and shrinking back, not caring to come nigh, but choosing rather to stand at a distance, or get off and escape if he could; but on the other hand, Job would go up to his judge, and to the judgment seat, with all the stateliness of a prince, with an heroic, intrepid, and undaunted spirit; like a “bold prince”, as Mr. Broughton renders the word; (see ~~1827B~~ Job 23:3).

Ver. 38. *If my land cry against me*, etc.] Some think that this verse and (~~1813D~~ Job 31:39,40) stand out of their place, and should rather follow after (~~1813A~~ Job 31:34); and some place them after (~~1812S~~ Job 31:25); and others after (~~1810B~~ Job 31:8); but this is the order of them in all copies and versions, as they stand in our Bibles; and here, after Job had expressed his desire to have a hearer and judge of his cause, and his charge exhibited in writing, and his confidence of the issue of it, should it be granted, returns to his former subject, to clear himself from any notorious vice he was suspected of or charged with; and as he had gone through what might respect him in private life, here he gives another instance in public life, with which he concludes; namely, purging himself from tyranny and oppression, with which his friends had charged him without any proof; and he denies that the land he lived on was possessed of, and of which he was the proprietor, cried against him as being unjustly gotten, either by fraud or by force, from others; or as being ill used by him either as being too much cultivated, having never any rest, or lying fallow; and so much weakened and drained

of its strength, or neglected and overrun with weeds, thorns, and thistles; or on account of the dressers and tillers of it being badly dealt with, either overworked, or not having sufficiency of food, or their wages, detained from them; all which are crying sins, and by reason of which the land by a figure may be said to cry out as the stone out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber, because of the sins of spoil, violence, oppression, and covetousness, (^{<3011>}Habakkuk 2:11);

or that the furrows likewise thereof complain; or “weep”^{f1152}, on account of the like ill usage. Jarchi, and so the Midrash, interpret this of not allowing the forgotten sheaf and corner of the field to the poor, and detaining the tithes; and of ploughing and making furrows with an ox and an ass together; but the laws respecting these things were not yet in being; and if they had been, were only binding on Israelites, and not on Job, and the men of his country.

Ver. 39. *If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money*, etc.] Or, “the strength thereof without silver”^{f1153}; (see ^{<0042>}Genesis 4:12), silver being the money chiefly in use in those times. Job’s meaning is, that he ate not anything of the fruits and increase of his own land, without having paid for the same, which he would have done, if he had got his land out of the hands of the rightful owners of it, by deceit or violence; or if he had not paid his workmen for ploughing, sowing, reaping, etc. or if he had demanded the fruits of the earth of his tenants, to whom he had let out his farms, without giving them a proper price for them:

or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life; as Jezebel caused Naboth to lose his, who was the original proprietor, that Ahab might possess it, (^{<1207>}1 Kings 21:7-16); or it may signify tenants, to whom Job rented out fields, but did not starve them by renting them under hard leases, or lands on hard terms, so that they could not live upon them; or it may design the tillers of the land, as Jarchi and Bar Tzemach; those that wrought in it, the servants that were employed in ploughing, etc. to whom wages were due, and who had not too hard labour imposed upon them, to the endangering of their lives; or he did not “afflict [and] grieve”^{f1154} them, as some versions; or make their lives bitter, through hard bondage and service, as the Israelites in Egypt.

Ver. 40. *Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley*, etc.] This is an imprecation of Job’s, in which he wishes that if what he had said was not true, or if he was guilty of the crimes he denied, that when

and where he sowed wheat, thorns or thistles might come up instead of it, or tares, as some Jewish writers ^{f1155} interpret it; and that when and where he should sow barley, cockle, or darnel, or any “stinking” or “harmful” weed ^{f1156}, as the word signifies, might spring up in room of it; respect seems to be had to the original curse upon the earth, and by the judgment of God is sometimes the case, that a fruitful land is turned into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell in it, (~~100B8~~ Genesis 3:18 ~~19A73~~ Psalm 107:34);

the words of Job are ended; which is either said by himself, at the close of his speech; thus far says Job, and no farther, having said enough in his own defence, and for the confutation of his antagonists, and so closes in a way of triumph: or else this was added by Moses, supposed to have written this book; or by some other hand, as Ezra, upon the revision of it, and other books of the Old Testament, when put in order by him: and these were the last words of Job to his friends, and in vindication of himself; for though there is somewhat more said afterwards by him, and but little, yet to God, and by way of humiliation, acknowledging his sin, and repentance for it with shame and abhorrence; (see ~~1841B~~ Job 40:3-5 42:1-6). Jarchi, and so the Midrash, understand this concluding clause as all imprecation of Job’s; that if he had done otherwise than he had declared, he wishes that these might be his last words, and he become dumb, and never open his mouth more; but, as Bar Tzemach observes, the simple sense is, that his words were now completed and finished, just as the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are said to be, (~~3972B~~ Psalm 72:20).