



The Book of Job is much more than a “story.” It deals in depth with the major questions of the human condition. The misfortunes of Job—after having been abundantly blessed all his life, he is reduced to utmost misery—are merely a pretext to have us reflect on this reality: human life on earth is not satisfying. Suffering and death would not be so dark if it were not for this malaise or scandal that comes from the absence of God in our world.

Job only needs to contemplate nature to believe in God and divine providence. However, his misfortunes bring him to reconsider the concept he had of a tacit agreement between the just man, himself, and the just God.

Job accuses and cries out to God with all the force of his thwarted hope and, in the end, God will have to intervene.

The Book of Job

The starting point of this book is a popular tale found in the first and last pages (1:1–2:13 and 42:10-17): the story of the holy man Job. Yahweh had tested him by taking everything away from him; but, in spite of that, Job remained faithful. In the end, God gave everything back to him.

The moral was somewhat simplistic. Then, an unknown author wrote the poems of Chapters 3–41. There, a very different Job from the first one accuses the human condition; and his three friends confront him with the answers of traditional wisdom.

These chapters constitute the most sizable collection of sapiential literature in the Scriptures. It may be helpful to recall that this new section presents a view of life that is very different from the view proposed in the books of the law and the

prophetic books. These were mostly interested in the history of Israel, the ups and downs of the Sinai Covenant that had transformed Israel into a people set apart and the bearer of a universal mission.

On the other hand, here, the history and vocation of Israel are forgotten (seemingly, at least). The author has returned to what constitutes the lives of all humans, whatever their countries or religions may be. Human beings are before their destiny, with no other revelation than what nature is telling them in a thousand ways, what the tradition of their ancestors has handed down to them and has interpreted for them. Human beings are not in a world without God. On the contrary, they see God's presence everywhere. Yet, they are first conditioned by their material existence; and the fact that so many people live in inhuman conditions raises questions about God's honesty and the way God treats human beings.

Job's discourses are strongly marked by the culture of his time. Above all, he insists on being known as a just man: honor and shame are decisive criteria for tribes. Hence, the need to appeal to an arbitrator or a tribunal to clear his good name when his misfortunes have made him look guilty. The book is going to show that there is no answer: God's intervention in Chapters 38–42 moves in a different direction from the conclusion in 42:10–17. We remain with our malaise and we will not be healed before we see God.

THE TRADITIONAL FIGURE OF JOB

Ezk
14:14;
Jas 5:11

1 • ¹Job, a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil, once lived in the land of Uz. ²He had seven sons and three daughters. ³Owner of seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys and a large number of servants, he was considered the greatest man among the people of the East.

⁴His sons used to take turns holding banquets in their homes and they would invite their three sisters to dine and drink with them. ⁵After each series of banquets, Job would send for his sons and daughters and have them purified. He would rise early in the morning, offer a holocaust for each of his children, thinking, "Perhaps they have sinned and blasphemed God in their hearts." This had been quite a routine for Job.

1K
22:19;
Dn 7:10;
Heb
12:22;
Rev 5:11

⁶One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan came with them. ⁷Yahweh asked Satan, "Where have you been?"

Satan answered, "Going up and down the earth, roaming about."

⁸Yahweh asked again, "Have you noticed my servant Job? No one on earth is as blameless and upright as he, a man who fears God and avoids evil."

⁹But Satan returned the question, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" ¹⁰Have you not built a protective wall around him and his family and all his possessions? You have blessed and prospered him, with his livestock all over the land. ¹¹But stretch out your hand and strike where his riches are, and I bet he will curse you to your face."

¹²Yahweh said to Satan, "Very well, all that he has is in your power. But do not lay a finger upon the man himself." So Satan left the presence of Yahweh.

¹³One day, while his sons and daughters were feasting in the house of their eldest brother, ¹⁴a messenger came to Job and said, "Your oxen were plowing, and your donkeys were grazing nearby ¹⁵when the Sabaeans came and carried them off. They killed the herdsmen. I alone escaped to tell you."

¹⁶While he was still speaking, another messenger came, "God's fire fell from the sky and burned all your sheep and the shepherds as well. I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹⁷He had hardly finished speaking when another messenger arrived, "Three raiding teams of Chaldeans have killed your servants and carried off your camels. I alone have escaped to tell you."

• **1.1** Job lives in a foreign pagan land (Uz would be in the southern part of Palestine) in ancient times. His position is enviable: he is a leader of nomads, somewhat like Abraham, and lacks nothing. Yet he is only a pawn in world politics, or better, in heavenly politics. God holds a council with the *heavenly beings*, namely, the angels, and looks at things which escape Job. In this case, God is challenged by Satan, the enemy, the spirit who promotes evil, and in spite of himself God has to test Job in order to defend his own honor.

And so, from the very start, humans are put in their place. They are not the center of the

world, nor can they demand that God stop the course of history for their sake.

This intervention of Satan is one of the means to which believers spontaneously resort to justify God. Because, in the final analysis, that is where the problem lies. As long as we live without God, no one is responsible for evil except ourselves. If we have good and evil gods, we know whom to blame. If there is only one God, he is responsible for both good and evil and Job's words in 2:10 also apply to him.

Curse God and die! (2:9) Job's wife speaks foolishly, with reproaches to God which are always hopeless.

¹⁸He was still speaking when another messenger came and said to Job, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the house of their eldest brother ¹⁹when suddenly a great wind blew across the desert and struck the house. It collapsed on the young people and they all died. I alone have escaped to tell you.”

²⁰In grief Job tore his clothes and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground and worshiped, ²¹saying,

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
naked shall I return.

Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken away.

Blessed be his name!”

²²In spite of this calamity, Job did not sin by blaspheming God.

2 ¹Once more, the heavenly beings came to present themselves before Yahweh, and again Satan was with them. ²Yahweh asked Satan, “Where have you been?”

Satan answered, “Going up and down the earth, roaming about.”

³Yahweh asked again, “Have you noticed my servant Job? No one on earth is as blameless and upright as he, a man who fears God and avoids evil. He still holds fast to his integrity even if you provoked me to ruin him without cause.”

⁴Satan replied, “Skin for skin! For his own life, anyone will give everything he owns. ⁵But lay your hand against his own flesh and bones and he will curse you to your face.”

⁶Yahweh said to Satan, “Very well, he is in your power. But spare his life.” Lk 22:31

⁷So Satan left the presence of Yahweh and afflicted Job with festering sores, from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. ⁸Job took a potsherd to scrape himself and sat among the ashes. Lev 13:46

⁹His wife said to him, “Do you still hold on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”

¹⁰Job replied, “You talk foolishly. If we receive good things from God, why can’t we accept evil from him?” In spite of this calamity, Job did not utter a sinful word.

THE POEMS OF JOB BEGIN HERE

• ¹¹Three of Job’s friends—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite—heard of the misfortune that came upon him. They set out from their own homes and journeyed together to offer their sympathy and consolation to Job.

¹²Failing to recognize him from the distance, they wept aloud, tore their garments and poured dust upon their

heads. ¹³For seven days and seven nights, they sat on the ground beside him. They did not say a word to Job, for they saw how terribly he suffered.

May that day perish when I was born

3 • ¹At length it was Job who spoke, spoke, cursing the day of his birth. ²This is what he said:

• **2.11** As we remarked in the introduction, this is the beginning of the dialogue on suffering, leaving aside the story of Job, the popular figure who accepted God’s will without arguing as we saw in Chapter 2.

• **3.1** *Cursed be the day I was born* (v. 3). These first verses repeat what Jeremiah said in a moment of despair (see Jer 20:14). God’s friends have at times spoken in the same way, others—less solid—have thought of suicide.

³Cursed be the day I was born,
and the night which whispered:
A boy has been conceived.

Jer
20:14;
15:10

⁴May that day be dark,
may God on high ignore it.
May no light shine upon it.

⁵May the shadow of death claim it as its own.
May a cloud settle over it;
may blackness obstruct its light.

⁶Let darkness swallow that night
let it not add to the rest of the year
let it not be included in the month.

⁷That night—oh, let it be barren,
untouched by shouts of joy.

⁸Let it be cursed by those who hate the light,
sorcerers who call on the Devil.

40:25;
Pss 74:14

⁹Let its morning stars no longer shine;
let it wait for light in vain
and never see the first rays of dawn,

¹⁰since it did not close the womb
to keep my eyes from seeing doom.

¹¹Why didn't I die at birth,
or come from the womb without breath?

¹²Why the knees that received me,
why the breasts that suckled me?

¹³For then I should have lain down
asleep and been at rest

Ecl 6:3

¹⁴with kings and rulers of the earth
who built for themselves lonely tombs;

¹⁵or with princes who had gold to spare
and houses stuffed with silver.

¹⁶Why was I not stillborn,
like others who did not see the light of morn?

¹⁷There, the trouble of the wicked ceases,
there, the weary find repose.

¹⁸There, the prisoners are at ease;
they no longer hear the taskmaster's voice.

Why is light given to the miserable... whose path has vanished (vv. 20-23)? Why are children born crippled or blind, or destined for an atrocious death? We would be wrong to only think of the marginalized or those crushed by misfortune. It's in the world where nothing is wanting where people are not desperate, but without hope in the midst of gadgets: it is there where young couples opt for death in not want-

ing to have children.

In past centuries people were driven by the uncontainable energy of life. They lived and made sacrifices for the survival of their people. Our parents worked and procreated without asking themselves why. When people reach maturity in critical thinking, they need an answer to this question: Why live if, in the end, life leads nowhere?

¹⁹Great and small fare equally there,
where the slave is free from his master.

²⁰Why is light given to the miserable,
and life to the embittered?

²¹To those who long for death
more than for hidden treasure?

²²They rejoice at the sight of their end,
they are happy upon reaching the grave.

²³Why give light to a man whose path has vanished,
whose ways God blocks at every side?

²⁴Instead of bread I feed on sighs.
My groans are like water poured out.

²⁵For what I fear has come upon me,
what I dread has befallen me.

²⁶I find no rest, I find no ease;
only turmoil, nothing of peace!

No one is just before God

4¹ Eliphaz the Temanite spoke next:

²Shall we speak? Do you mind?
For who could remain silent?

³Remember how you have taught many others,
how you have strengthened their feeble hands.

⁴Your words have supported those who wavered,
have steadied the knees that faltered.

⁵But when your turn has come, you are discouraged;
as soon as you are struck, you are dismayed.

⁶Should you not rely on your piety,
and find assurance in your integrity?

⁷Have you seen a guiltless man perish,
or an upright man done away with?

• **4.1** Eliphaz is a believer. Faced with Job's grief, he repeats what was commonly said in those days:

– God is just in this life: he rewards the just with health and prosperity.

– If you are sick and abandoned, it is because you have sinned.

Eliphaz is not wrong in recalling that the wicked are afflicted with misfortune and that God's providence favors his friends. Scripture does state that, as anyone can easily verify. The prophets did not hesitate to repeat to Israel that its difficulties were the consequence of their sins. Deuteronomy also declares this (Dt 30:15-20) and the Book of Judges claims to prove it through historical events (Jdg 2:11-19).

Eliphaz claims he is speaking because of a revelation from God such as many prophets had in their dreams. He is surely pointing out the truth: *Can a mortal be just in the eyes of God? Can anyone be pure before God? People complain that life is meaningless, but maybe sin prevents them from seeing its meaning.*

Have you seen a guiltless man perish? (v. 7). People of faith understand that God "brings the powerful down and he exalts the humble," but daily experience often seems to show the opposite. According to the Gospel, wealth can be a negative sign. Eliphaz speaks with such assurance because he has not suffered in his own flesh, nor does he pay enough attention to those who suffer.

⁸As I see it, those who plow evil
or those who sow trouble reap the same.
⁹By the breath of God they are swept away;
by the blast of his wrath they are destroyed.
¹⁰The lion may roar and growl; it will fall,
the teeth of its cubs will be broken.
¹¹The lion will die for lack of prey,
and the whelps of its mate will stray.

¹²I had a secret revelation;
a whisper of it reached my ear.
¹³Amid thoughts from night visions,
when people are heavily wrapped in slumber,

¹⁴I was seized with fear and trembling
that shook me to my very bones.

¹⁵A spirit passed over my face,
and the hair of my body stood on end.

¹⁶It stopped and stood before my eyes,
but I could not make out what it was.
Silence... and then—a voice was heard:

¹⁷"Can a mortal be just in the eyes of God?
Can a man be pure before his Maker?"

¹⁸If God can put no trust in his servants,
if he can charge his angels with error,
¹⁹how much more those who live in houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed as easily as moths!

²⁰Between dawn and dusk they perish,
and unheeded, vanish forever.

²¹Their tent has been unpegged
and they died without knowing why.

5³I have seen a fool taking root when
suddenly his household collapsed.

⁴His children went about without
security,
crushed in court without a defender.

⁵The hungry consumed his harvest
and carried it to a hiding place;
his surplus was taken away,
the thirsty hankered after his wealth.

⁶For affliction comes not from the earth,
nor does sorrow sprout from the ground;

⁷humans are those who carry about
trouble,
as an eagle in the heights brings down
lightning flash.

²Resentment kills the fool,
and anger slays the simple.

¹Call then, but who will answer you?
Who of the Saints will you turn to?

⁸If I were you, I would appeal to God
and lay before him my case,

⁹for wonders are past all reckoning,
his miracles beyond all counting.

¹⁰He pours rain down on the earth
and sends water upon the fields.

¹¹He sets the lowly on high,
turns grief into joy.

¹²He wrecks the plans of the crafty,
so that their hands achieve no success.

¹³He traps the clever in their devices
and puts an end to the schemes of the
wily.

¹⁴Darkness comes upon them in the
daytime;

they grope at noon as in the night.

¹⁵He rescues the despoiled from the
despoiler,
the weak from the hands of the violent.

Gen
15:12

1K19:13

9:10

1S 2:7

1Cor
3:19

Heb
12:5;
Rev
3:19

¹⁶ Thus hope comes to the lowly,
and injustice shuts its mouth.

¹⁷ Blessed is the one whom God corrects;
reject not, therefore, the lessons of the
Almighty,

¹⁸ He cures the wounds he has inflicted;
he strikes but he also heals.

¹⁹ From six troubles he will rescue you;
at the seventh no harm will touch you.

²⁰ In famine he saves you from death;
in war, from the threat of the sword.

²¹ You will be protected from the lash of
the tongue,

and have no dread of marauding bands.

²² You will laugh at destruction and want;
and have no fear of the wild animals.

²³ No more stones in your fields, the soil
will serve you,
and wild animals be at peace with you.

²⁴ You will find your tent secure,
your household untouched when you
come home.

²⁵ You will have children in plenty
and descendants like the grass of the hills.

²⁶ You will come to the grave in a ripe age,
like a sheaf of grain gathered in season.

²⁷ This we have examined and found true.
This we have heard, and you should

know.

What is man that you keep him in mind

6 • ¹ Job replied:

² If only my anguish could be measured
and my misery put on the scales;
³ they would outweigh the sands of the
seashore!

It is for this that I speak impetuously.

⁴ Pierced by the arrows of the Almighty,
my spirit absorbs their poison;
my heart fails before the terrors of God.

⁵ Does a wild ass bray when it has fodder?
Does an ox bellow when it has grass?

⁶ What taste would food have without
salt?

What flavor is there in the white of an egg?

⁷ So everything is tasteless for me,
I am bored with my bread.

⁸ Would that I get my request,
that God grant me what I want—

⁹ that he would decide to crush me,
let loose his hand and strike me down!

¹⁰ Then this at least would comfort me,
my only joy in merciless dread,
that I have not cursed the will of the

Holy One.

¹¹ Will I be able to go on hoping,
what expectation to keep on waiting?

¹² Have I the strength of stone,
and is my flesh of bronze?

¹³ There is no one to help me,
all aid has departed from me.

¹⁴ Friends without compassion
made me lose the fear of the Almighty.

¹⁵ My brothers have been fickle,
like the flowing of seasonal waters.

¹⁶ They were but melted ice
running from under the snow.

¹⁷ But summer comes and the river dries,
under the blazing sun no water is left.

¹⁸ Because of this caravans get lost,
go to wastelands and perish.

¹⁹ The merchants of Tema search for the
brooks,

the travelers of Sheba look for them.

²⁰ In vain they expected,
they are frustrated on arriving there.

²¹ Now you too are unable to help me;
you see a horror and draw back in fear.

²² Have I asked you to give me anything?

Did I say, "Pay a ransom for me,
²³ deliver me from the enemy
or rescue me from a tyrant?"

²⁴ Teach me and I will keep silent;
show me where I have been wrong.

²⁵ Honest words I must not resent,
but what have your arguments shown?

• **6.1** Job is bitter towards all these friends who make speeches but do not bring him peace. Now he begs God to let him die before he rebels against him under the pressure of evil (vv. 8-10).

In verses 15-30, Job emphasizes the abyss which separates those who suffer from those who come to console. How many disguises at a patient's bedside? Those consoling the afflicted want to hide their own confusion before pain and their inability to really lighten suffering. However, the sick person is not fooled and feels more isolated in realizing he or she is not told the truth.

In Chapter 7, Job addresses an absent God. Job does not know God-Father and the trial brings out in him suspicions against a jealous God who watches people in order to punish them.

Yet Job's complaint against God reminds us of the friction between people who love each other, and precisely because they love each other they are more demanding.

What is man that you make much of him (7:17)? If God is watching over his favorite creatures at all times, could it not be because he cannot live without them?

Is 38:12

Jer
15:18

²⁶Do you mean to scorn my words,
or throw to the wind a cry of despair?
²⁷Would you cast lots for the orphan
and bargain over your friend?
²⁸But now, give me your attention;
surely I will not lie to your face.
²⁹Relent, and grant me justice;
reconsider, my case is not yet tried.
³⁰Is there insincerity on my tongue?
Have I misunderstood misery?

7 ¹Man's life on earth is a thankless job,
his days are those of a mercenary.

²Like a slave he longs for the shade of
evening,
like a hireling waiting for his wages.

³Thus I am allotted months of boredom
and nights of grief and misery.

Dt 28:67 ⁴In bed I say, "When shall the day break?"
On rising, I think, "When shall evening
come?"

and I toss restless till dawn.

⁵My body is full of worms and scabs;
my skin festers with its boils and cracks.

Is 38:12 ⁶My days pass swifter than a weaver's
shuttle,

heading without hope to their end.

⁷My life is like wind, you well know it,
O God; never will I see happiness again.

⁸The eye that saw me will see me no more;
when you look for me, I shall have gone.

Wis 2:1;
Jas 4:14;
Wis 2:5 ⁹As a cloud dissolves and vanishes,
so he who goes to the grave never returns.

Ecl 1:2 ¹⁰He will never come back to his house;
or be seen by his household.

¹¹So I will not restrain my words,
I will speak out in anguish;
and complain with embittered soul,

¹²"Am I the sea or a monster of the deep,
that you keep me under watch?"

¹³When I think my bed will comfort me
and my couch will soothe my pain,

¹⁴then you frighten me with dreams
and terrify me with visions;

¹⁵I would prefer death by strangling
rather than such a trial.

¹⁶See I am dying, never to live again.
Leave me alone; I am finished.

¹⁷What is man that you make much of him,
that you give him so much attention,

¹⁸that every morning you examine him
and check him all the time?

¹⁹Will you never take your eyes off me
and give me respite to swallow my spittle?

²⁰Suppose I sinned, what has it done to you,
O keeper of humans?

Why choose me as your target?
Have I become a burden to you?

²¹Why not pardon my sin
and take away my guilt?
For in the dust I will soon lie down;
and should you seek me I shall then be gone.

Does God pervert judgment?

8 ¹Bildad the Shuhite spoke:
²How long will you say such things?
Your words are long-winded blusterings.

³Does God pervert judgment?
Does the Almighty distort justice?

⁴If your children did him wrong,
he has made them pay for their sins.

⁵But if you will have recourse to God
and plead with the Almighty,

⁶if you are faultless and righteous,
even now he will care for you
and restore you to your rightful place.

⁷And your prosperity will be such
as to make you forget former times.

⁸Inquire of the past generations
and learn from their ancestors'

experience;

⁹for born but yesterday, we know nothing
and our days on earth are but a shadow.

¹⁰They will correct and teach you
with words that come from the heart.

¹¹Can papyrus thrive without marsh?
Can reeds flourish without water?

¹²Even if still growing and uncut,
they wither more quickly than any plant.

¹³Such is the end of those who forget God;
the hope of the godless perishes.

¹⁴His trust is hanging by a thread;
a spider's web is what he relies on.

¹⁵He leans on his house, but it does not
stand;

he clings to it, but it crumbles.

¹⁶He is sturdy under the sun,
spreading its shoots in the garden,

¹⁷its roots entwined around the rocks,
holding fast to each stone.

¹⁸But when uprooted, the place rejects it:
"I have never known you."

¹⁹And there it lies rotting by the road,
while other plants grow in its place.

²⁰Indeed God does not reject the
blameless,

nor lend his hand to the evildoer.

²¹He will again fill your mouth with laughter
and your lips with joyful shouts.

²²Your enemies will be confused,
and the tent of the wicked will disappear.

I cannot argue with you, nevertheless...

9¹ Then Job answered:

²Very well I know that it is so.

But how can a mortal be just before God?

³If one were to contend with him,
not once in a thousand times would he answer.

⁴His power is vast, his wisdom profound.
Who has resisted him and come out unharmed?

⁵He moves mountains before they are aware;
he overturns them in his rage.

⁶He makes the earth tremble
and its pillars quake.

⁷He commands the sun, and it does not shine;
he seals off the light of the stars.

⁸He alone stretches out the skies
and treads on the waves of the seas.

⁹He made the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and every constellation.

¹⁰His wonders are past all reckoning,
his miracles beyond all counting.

¹¹He passes by, but I do not see him;
he moves on, but I do not notice him.

¹²If he snatches away, who can stop him?
Who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

¹³God does not turn back when angered;
before him Rahab's cohorts cowered.

¹⁴How then can I answer him
and find words to argue with him?

¹⁵If he does not answer when I am right,
shall I plead with my judge for mercy?

Is 13:13;
Ps 114:7

Is 40:22;
44:24

5:9

Rom
9:20

• **9.1** Job is upset before an inaccessible God. The Creator's greatness does not console the one who suffers without being heard. The misfortune of a single just one distorts creation.

Again, Job not only questions evil, but also the very situation created by human existence with its freedom. The God who made us free persons must also be a Person, and as long as he does not speak to us, his silence may be interpreted as a refusal to dialogue and a proof of indifference toward us.

Can a mortal be just before God (v. 2)? The same question is found in 4:17 and 22:2. This guilt feeling and the opposite feeling of hostility towards God are two sides of the same coin: the human condition is unacceptable as long as God makes people who cannot find him.

If I were innocent, my own mouth would condemn me (v. 20). Job reminds us of those notorious trials where militants, unjustly accused by their own party, come to admit their guilt "spontaneously." Similarly, many times a single mishap would be enough to make us feel sinful.

In your goodness you gave me life (10:12). Job cannot deny that God is concerned about his creatures, and he remembers the wonders God achieves in the pregnant mother. These attentions only open the way for his demands: gifts coming to us from people above arouse our suspicions more than our gratitude: *I know what was in your mind (10:13).*

After years without thinking, people begin to reflect and it is then that the absence of the Creator may prepare them for rebellion.

¹⁶Even if I appealed and he answered,
I do not believe that he would have heard.

¹⁷He who crushes me for a trifle
and multiplies my hurt for no reason.

¹⁸He does not give me time to breathe,
but fills me with grief without pause.

¹⁹If it is a contest of strength, he is mighty.
If a matter of justice, who will summon him?

²⁰If I were innocent, my own mouth would condemn me;
if blameless, it would pronounce me guilty.

²¹But am I innocent, after all? I do not know,
and so I find my life despicable.

²²It is all the same! And this I dare say:
both blameless and wicked—he destroys.

Ecl 9:2

²³When disaster brings sudden death,
he mocks the despair of the innocent.

²⁴When a nation falls into a tyrant's hand,
it is he who makes the judges blind.
But if it is not he—who else then?

Ecl 4:1

²⁵Swifter than a runner are my days;
without a shred of joy they fly away.

²⁶They skim along like reed canoes
or like eagles swooping on their prey.

²⁷If I resolve to forget my affliction,
to smile and change my expression,

²⁸my trials make me fear
for I know I shall be held accountable.

²⁹In any case if I am to be condemned,
why should I bother in vain?

³⁰If I washed my body with snow
and cleansed my hands with soap,

³¹you would plunge me into the dung pit,
and my very clothes would abhor me.

³²He is not a man like me that I might say,
“let us go to court together.”

³³Would that there were an arbiter
between us,

who could lay his hand upon both of us.

³⁴He would remove from me the rod of
God

and his terrors which frighten me.

³⁵But it is not so. Then I will speak
to myself alone without fear.

Is 1:18

You hunt me like a lion

10

¹Since I loathe my life,

I shall pour forth my complaint;

I shall speak of my soul's torment.

²I shall say to God: Do not condemn me,
but tell me what is your quarrel with me?

³Would it be good for you to oppress me,
to spurn the work of your hands
and favor the designs of the wicked?

⁴Have you human eyes?

Do you see as man sees?

⁵Are your days as the days of man,
or your years as a mortal's lifetime?

⁶Why do you seek guilt in me
and search for my faults?

1S 16:7;
Hos 11:9

Gen 2:7;
Ps
139:13

⁷You know I have not sinned,
but who can rescue me from your hand?

⁸You have formed and made me.
Will you then turn and destroy me?

⁹Remember that you molded me from clay.
Will you turn me to dust again?

¹⁰Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese?

¹¹You wrapped me up in skin and flesh,
knit me together with bones and sinews.

¹²In your goodness you gave me life
and watched over my breathing with care.

¹³Yet this is what you hid in your heart,
I know what was in your mind:

¹⁴You wanted to see if I sinned,
and not let my fault be forgiven.

¹⁵If I am guilty—alas for me!

If innocent—I dare not lift my head,
humbled and shamed in my affliction.

¹⁶Exhausted, you hunt me like a lion,
you want to prove that you are stronger.

¹⁷You renew your attack on me;
you intensify your rage,
wave upon wave, your forces assail me.

¹⁸Why did you bring me out of the womb?
I wish I had died unseen,

^{19a}being that had not been—
carried from the womb direct to the tomb.

²⁰Are not my days almost over?
Turn away; leave me a while to recover

²¹before I go to the place of no return,
to the land of gloom and shadow,

²²to the land of chaos and deepest night,
where darkness is the only light.

The discourse of Zophar

11 ¹Zophar the Naamithite spoke:
²Must these words go unanswered?

Must you be right for talking so much?

³Will your prattle keep us silent?
Will no one answer your mocking?

⁴You say to God that your way is right,
that you are clean in his sight.

⁵How I wish that God would speak
and open his lips against you,
⁶to show you the secrets of wisdom

which put intelligence to shame,
then you would know
that God is recalling your sins.

Rom
11:33;
1Cor 2:9

⁷Can you fathom the mysteries of God,
probe the extent of his perfection?

⁸It is higher than heaven—
what can you do?

Deeper than the world of death—
what can you know?

⁹Its measure is wider than the earth,
broader than the sea.

¹⁰Who can stop him when he passes,
when he imprisons and calls to judgment?

¹¹He sees evil; he recognizes deceit.
Will he not then take note of it?

¹²So stupid people learn to be wise
as wild donkeys become tame.

¹³If you set your heart aright
and stretch out your hands to him,

¹⁴if you wash your hand of sin
and allow no evil in your tent,

¹⁵you will then raise your face in honor;
having no fear, you will feel secure.

¹⁶You will forget your suffering
and recall it only as waters gone by.

¹⁷Your life will be brighter than noontday
and its darkness like the morning.

Eph
3:18;
Bar 3:29

Is 58:8

¹⁸You will be comforted, for there is hope; you will be protected when you sleep.
¹⁹You will lie down with no one to fear; many will come to court your favor.
²⁰But the eyes of the wicked will fail; they will lose all way of escape, their one hope—that death will come.

Will you defend God with lies?

12 • ¹Then Job answered:
²No doubt you are the people's voice; when you die, wisdom dies with you!
³But I have a mind as well as you, I know all that you have said.
⁴To my friends I am a laughingstock when I call on God who does not answer; the just and blameless man is made fun of.
⁵"Contempt for the unfortunate," so think the prosperous,
 "a blow for those who are staggering."
⁶Yet the robbers' tents are undisturbed, those who provoke God are in peace, those who make a god of their strength.
⁷But ask the beasts to teach you, the birds of the air to tell you,
⁸the plants of the earth to instruct you, the fish of the sea to inform you.
⁹Who among them does not understand that behind all this is God's hand?
¹⁰He holds the life of every creature and the breath of humans.

Mt 6:26

Num 16:22

¹¹The ear surely can test the words as the tongue tastes food;
¹²wisdom is found in the old, and understanding in great age;
¹³in God however is wisdom and power; his are counsel and understanding.
¹⁴What he tears down, none can rebuild; the one he imprisons, none can release.
¹⁵If he withholds water, there is drought;
 if he lets it loose, there is flood.
¹⁶In him are strength and perception; deceived and deceiver are in his power.
¹⁷He leads counselors away stripped and makes fools of judges.
¹⁸He loosens the belt of kings and ties a loincloth about their waist.
¹⁹He leads priests away, barefoot, and overthrows those in power.
²⁰He compels advisers to keep silent, and strips elders of their discernment.
²¹He puts princes to shame; he unties the girdle of the strong.
²²(He uncovers the gloomy recesses and brings the deep darkness to light.)
²³He makes a nation rise and fall, a people to grow and to dwindle.
²⁴He deprives leaders of their judgment, leaving them to roam in a trackless waste.
²⁵Without light, they grope in the dark and stagger like drunkards.

34:3

Is 11:2

13

• ¹My eyes have seen all this,
 my ears have heard and understood.
²What you know, I also know;
 I am not inferior to you.
³But I would like to speak to the Almighty,
 I want to plead my case with God.
⁴You are glossing over the problem
 and offering false remedies.
⁵If only you would keep silent,
 that would at least be wisdom.

• **12.1** Zophar kept on repeating the arguments of the wise: if you are suffering, you are guilty; mend your ways and you will be healed. Then Job continues to accuse God. He lists some of the injustices which we see daily. Then, in verses 14-25, he emphasizes that God's power manifests itself especially in his destructive action. God upsets the fortune of the powerful,

distorts the wisdom of the sages, prevents people from being successful, and does not allow their ventures to last. In the midst of a perfect universe, human history has no meaning.

• **13.1** Faced with a meaningless life, human wisdom does not have an adequate answer. So Job accuses these wise men who pretend to

⁶Hear now my argument;
 listen to my defense.
⁷Will you speak falsely for God?
 Will you defend him with false inventions?
⁸Will you side with him
 and advocate on his behalf?
⁹What if he examines you?
 Could he be deceived as people are?
¹⁰He will rebuke you for sure
 if in secret you show partiality.
¹¹You will be terrified by his majesty,
 and you will be in dread of him.
¹²Heaps of ashes are your maxims;
 mounds of clay are your defenses.
¹³So keep silent and let me speak;
 this will be at my own risk.
¹⁴I am putting myself in jeopardy
 and gambling for my life.
¹⁵Though he may slay me,
 I will still argue with him;
¹⁶and this boldness might even save me
 for godless do not dare draw near him.
¹⁷Carefully listen to my words,
 give my case a hearing.
¹⁸I will proceed in due form
 believing that I am guiltless.
¹⁹If anyone makes good his charges,
 I am ready to be silenced and die.
²⁰Only grant me these two things, O God,
 and from you I will not hide:
²¹Withdraw your hand far from me,
 and do not frighten me with your terrors.
²²Summon me and I will respond;
 or let me speak and then have your reply.
²³What are my faults, what are my sins?
 Make them all known to me.
²⁴Why hide your face from me
 and consider me your enemy?

justify God while forgetting reality (vv. 1-6). *Will you defend God with false inventions* (v. 7)? It is better to keep quiet and admit our own ignorance.

This boldness might even save me (v. 16). Job is so convinced that God is just that he wants to force him to break his silence. Perhaps God will make him die because of his boldness

but, at least, Job will have had an answer and he will know why he dies (vv. 13-20).

Job's bold attitude corrects the widespread image of a believer as one who accepts with resignation without trying to understand. Job does not fall down before God like a slave, but rather, being conscious of his dignity in the eyes of his Maker, he asks for an explanation.

²⁵Why torment a wind-blown leaf
or pursue a withered straw?
²⁶But you search for accusations
and you recall the sins of my youth.
²⁷You shackle my feet,
keep watch on all my paths
and mark out my footsteps.

Man born of woman has a short life

14

• ¹Man born of woman
has a short life full of sorrow.
²Like a flower he blossoms and withers;
transient and fleeting as a shadow.
13 ²⁸He falls apart like worm-eaten wood,
like cloth devoured by the moths.
³Is he the one you look on
and bring before you for judgment?
⁴Who can bring the clean from the unclean?
No one!
⁵Since his days are measured
and you have decreed the number of his months,
set him bounds he cannot pass,
⁶then leave him alone. Turn away from him
till he completes his day like a hireling.
⁷There is hope for a tree:
if cut down it will sprout again,
its new shoots will still appear.
⁸Though its roots grow old in the ground
and its stump withers in the soil,
⁹at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth shoots like a young plant.
¹⁰But when man is cut down, he comes undone;
he breathes his last—where will he be?
¹¹The waters of the sea may disappear,
rivers drain away,

Ecl 6:12

Ecl 3:21

• **14.1** Through his personal case, Job presents a general criticism of the human condition, and he does it in a way very similar to Ecclesiastes. He emphasizes the following about human fate:

- life is short;
- sufferings are countless;
- the grace of youth is followed by the bitterness of adult life;
- there is a degree of impurity in humans, namely, something mysterious which ruins everything they undertake;

– when looking at life, they would like to live forever, which is not granted to them.

While Ecclesiastes accepts the universal law, Job dreams of a God who might talk with him and forget, for a time, his superiority (vv. 15-17).

Here we see one of the results of the teaching that God gave his people for centuries. As the Israelites understood better the alliance that linked them with God, they became more human. Whereas their ancestors like Jacob or Moses were resigned to their mortal destiny, they aspired for something better.

¹²but the one who lies down will not rise again;
the heavens will vanish before he wakes,
before he rises from his sleep.

- ¹³If only you would hide me in the grave
and shelter me till your wrath is past!
If only you would set a time for me
and then remember me!

¹⁴If you die, will you live again?
All the days of my service
I would wait for my release.

¹⁵You would call and I would answer;
you would long for the work of your hands again.

¹⁶Now you watch my every step,
but then you would stop counting my sins.

¹⁷My offenses would be sealed in a bag,
and you would do away with my guilt.

¹⁸But as mountains erode and crumble,
as rock is moved from its place,
¹⁹as waters wear away stones
and floods wash away the soil,
so you destroy the hope of man.

²⁰You crush him once for all, and he is
gone;
you change his appearance and send
him away.

²¹If his children are honored, he does
not know it;
if brought low, he does not see it.

²²Now the pain of his own body does
he feel;
only for himself does he mourn.

Another discourse of Eliphaz

15 ¹Eliphaz the Temanite spoke:
²Should a wise man answer with
airy notions,

puff himself up with senseless opinions?
³Should he argue in empty talk,
in words that are meaningless?

⁴You are undermining piety
and meditation in God's presence.

⁵Your iniquity instructs your mouth,
and you talk like the crafty.

⁶Your own mouth condemns you,
your own lips, not mine.

⁷Are you mankind's firstborn?
Were you brought forth before the hills?

⁸Are you privy to God's counsels?
Do you alone possess wisdom?

⁹What knowledge have you that we do
not have?

What do you understand that is obscure
to us?

¹⁰The gray-haired and the aged are
among us,
men older than your father.

¹¹Are God's consolations too small for
you,

and the words spoken gently to you?

¹²Why does your heart carry you away,
why do your eyes flash

¹³when you turn your wrath against God
and utter such words as these?

¹⁴What is man to claim innocence,
the child of woman to be cleared of guilt?

¹⁵If God puts no trust in his holy ones,
and (the) heavens are not clean in his eyes,

¹⁶how much less man who is vile and
corrupt,
who drinks evil as if it were water!

• 13. In verses 13-17 Job mentions the place of the dead, or Sheol, or netherworld, where the Jews thought that, after death, they would have some semblance of life, but would be more like prisoners far from Yahweh than like human beings who are alive and praise God (see Is 38:18-19). When someone has been called and loved by God he can no longer accept that he will disappear forever. And if God were to

let him survive in a place not close to God, he would always long to reach God: *I would wait for my release, You would call and I would answer* (vv. 14-15).

In Chapters 15-18 everyone proceeds without listening to the other: Job expresses his despair and his friends repeat their conviction that misfortunes are for the wicked.

¹⁷ Listen and I will explain;
I will tell you of my experience
¹⁸ and of the sages' teachings
passed on to them by their fathers,
¹⁹ to whom alone the land was given
when no foreigner moved among them.

²⁰ The wicked are in torment all their days.
During the years allotted to the tyrant
²¹ his ears are filled with terrifying sounds,
his peace shattered by the attack of
marauders.

²² He despairs of escaping the darkness
and sees himself given to the sword,
²³ then left as a prey for vultures,
he knows his destruction is at hand.

²⁴ The hour of darkness fills him with dread,
as distress and anguish close in on him.

²⁵ But look: he challenged God,
he raised his hand against the Almighty,
²⁶ charging stubbornly against him
behind a thick, sturdy shield.

²⁷ His face had grown full and fat,
his thighs bulged with flesh.

²⁸ He would dwell in ruined cities,
in deserted and crumbling houses.

²⁹ He will not prosper or take root;
he will not escape from darkness;
³⁰ a flame will wither his shoots;
the wind will carry off his blossom.

³¹ Let him not trust in greatness
for he will get nothing in return.

³² He will be paid in full before his time,
and his branches will never again be green.

³³ Like a vine he will be stripped of
unripe grapes;
like the olive, he will shed his blossoms.

³⁴ For the breed of the godless will be
barren,
and fire will consume the tents of extor-
tioners.

³⁵ Who conceives mischief will bring
forth evil,
deceit will spring from his own womb.

Where then can my hope be?

16 ¹ Then Job answered:
² I have heard many such things.
What miserable comforters you are!

³ When will your airy words end?
What ails you and keeps you arguing?

⁴ I too could talk as you do,
if you were in my place;
I could declaim over you
and shake my head at you.

⁵ I would give you strength,
and comfort you with words.

⁶ Yet if I talk, my suffering is not eased,
if I refrain, it does not go far from me.

⁷ I am upset with such ill will;
an evil band ⁸ takes hold of me.

They stand to testify against me;
and answer me with slanders.

⁹ They assail me with fury
and gnash their teeth at me;
my enemies lord it over me.

¹⁰ With open mouths they jeer at me;
they strike my cheek, and together
they mass themselves against me.

¹¹ God has given me over to sinners
and cast me into the clutches of the
wicked.

¹² All was well until he shattered me,
but he seized me and dashed me to
pieces.

Having set me up for a target,
¹³ he had his arrows pointed at me,
striking from every direction,
piercing my sides without pity,
spilling my gall on the ground.

¹⁴ Like a warrior he bears down on me,
thrusting me unceasingly.

¹⁵ I have fastened sackcloth over my skin
and buried my brow in dust.

¹⁶ My face is red with weeping,
deep shadows ring my eyes;
¹⁷ yet my hands are free of violence,
and my prayer sincere.

¹⁸ O earth, do not cover my blood;
let not my cry come to rest!

¹⁹ Even now my witness is in heaven
and my defender is on high.

²⁰ Now my prayer has gone up to God
as I poured out my tears before him.

²¹ Would that one could discuss with God
as he does with his fellows.

²² My years are numbered, and soon
I will take the road of no return.

Ps 73:4;
73:7

Gen
4:10

• **16.1** Notice the passage 16:8–17:7 which recalls Isaiah 53 and also the psalms evoking images of the Passion of Christ. When human beings are suffering, they share in the Passion of Christ, whether they know it or not; the confrontation of sin with the justice of God continues in them. God seems merciless in pursuing his

creatures, in completely humiliating them, but, in fact, he is removing the roots of our pride.

17:8–10 must be seen as Job's ironic answer to his friends, "You say that in seeing the wicked's misfortune, the just praise God's justice, well then, in seeing me so humiliated, rejoice and say: well done!"

17 ¹My spirit is broken,
my days are over
and the grave awaits me.
²Mockers surround me;
my eyes grow dim with nights of
bitterness.

³Sponsor me, O God,
since no one will support me.
⁴You have closed their minds
so they will not dare.
⁵Who will help a friend when his
children are in need?

⁶I have been made everybody's byword,
a man in whose face people spit.
⁷My eyes have grown dim with grief,
my frame shrunken to a shadow.

Is 52:15

⁸At this, the godly are appalled,
and the guiltless rail against the wicked.
⁹The righteous feel at ease
and those with clean hands are
strengthened.

¹⁰But come on again, all of you;
I will not find a single sage among you.
¹¹My days are ended, my plans shattered,
and so my heart desires
¹²the night when it is day,
the coming of light as soon as it darkens.
¹³Where is my hope? The grave is my
home,

in the darkness I spread out my bed,
¹⁴I must call corruption "my father,"
and the worm "my mother" or "my sister."
¹⁵What can I wait for,
and who will see any hope for me?
¹⁶Will it go down to the bars of death,
shall we descend together into the dust?

18 ¹Bildad the Shuhite replied:
²When will your empty words end?
Listen, and then we can talk.
³Why do you regard us like beasts?
Are we stupid in your sight?
⁴You who tear yourself in your wrath,
must the earth be lost on your account
the rocks be moved out of their place?
⁵Surely the evil man's lamp is snuffed
out;

his fire stops burning.
⁶The light dims in his tent;
the lamp shining on him goes out.
⁷His vigorous steps weaken;
his own schemes make him stumble.
⁸His feet take him to a net
or lead him into a pitfall.
⁹A trap seizes him by the heel;
a snare lays hold of him.

¹⁰Hidden in the ground is a noose for
him;

pitfalls await him along the way.

¹¹Terrors assail him on every side;
they harry him at every step.

¹²Hungering among his goods,
doom awaits him if he falls.

¹³Sickness eats his skin;
death's firstborn devours his limbs.

¹⁴Torn from the security of his tent,
he is marched off to the king of terrors,

¹⁵His tent is no longer his:
take it! Brimstone is scattered over his
field.

¹⁶Dried up below are his roots;
withered above are his branches.

¹⁷His memory perishes in the land,
his name is forgotten on the earth.

¹⁸From light he is driven into darkness;
he is banished from the world.

¹⁹He has no descendants among his
people,

no survivor where once he lived.

²⁰All in the west are appalled at his fate;
those of the east are seized with fright.

²¹Such is the lot of the wicked;
such is the place of one who knows not
God.

19 ¹Job answered:
²How long will you vex me,
crush me with your words?
³Ten times now you have reviled me,
you have attacked me shamelessly.
⁴If indeed I am at fault,
I alone am concerned with it.
⁵If you want to gloat over me
and use my humiliation as argument,
⁶know then that God has treated me
unfairly

and surrounded me with torment.

⁷Though I cry injustice I am not heard;
though I call for help it is in vain.

⁸He has blocked my way to prevent
me from passing;

he has shrouded my path and made it
dark.

⁹He has stripped me of honor,
and removed the crown from my head.

¹⁰On every side he tears me down
and uproots my hope till it is gone.

¹¹He directs his anger against me
and counts me as his enemy.

¹²Against me his troops build a siege
ramp,
and around my tent they encamp.

In my flesh I shall see God

- ¹³He has distanced me from my brothers,
completely estranged me from my friends.
- ¹⁴My kinsfolk and companions have gone away;
my guests have forsaken me,
- ¹⁵my maidservants count me as an alien
as if they had never known me
- ¹⁶I summon my servant, but he does not answer,
even when I plead with him.
- ¹⁷To my wife my breath is offensive;
to my own brothers I am loathsome.
- ¹⁸Even little children ridicule me:
Come! let us make fun of him!
- ¹⁹All my intimate friends detest me;
those I love have turned against me.
- ²⁰I have become skin and bone
and have escaped with only my gums.
- ²¹Have pity my friends, have pity,
for God's hand has struck me!
- ²²Why do you hound me as God does?
Will you never have enough of my flesh?
- ²³Oh, that my words were written,
or recorded on bronze
- ²⁴with an iron tool, a chisel
or engraved forever on rock!
- ²⁵For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and he, the last, will take his stand on earth.
- ²⁶I will be there behind my skin,
and in my flesh I shall see God.
- ²⁷With my own eyes I shall see him—
I and not another. How my heart yearns!
- ²⁸If you say, "We will pursue him!
let us find a charge against him",
- ²⁹be afraid of the sword yourselves;
when Wrath is inflamed against wrong,
you will know there is judgment.

Ps 27:2

Lev
25:25;
Ru 4:4

27:13

• **19.13** This poem in verses 13-22 deals with the destiny of the elderly and the sick who feel useless, the condition of a fallen man or woman, rejected by society and an object of repulsion for the relatives who can do nothing to help.

Here, halfway through the book, Job again strongly expresses his faith: *I know that my Redeemer lives... and in my flesh I shall see God* (vv. 25-26).

The very justice of God demands that he

speak after all the speakers. God often waits for his servants to die to justify them, but in the end he will come as Redeemer or Liberator: all will see and hear (Wis 5). Such was the hope of the oppressed just of whom Scripture speaks, and of Jesus himself.

In fact, Job himself is not an oppressed person waiting to be liberated. What is more important for him is not to prevail in reasoning with his adversaries, but to see God and hear him (v. 27).

Zophar: Evil will come to an end

20 ¹Zophar of Naamath spoke next:
²My troubled thoughts move me to reply

for I have been feeling impatient.

³I hear a rebuke which puts me to shame,
 and I am inspired to give an answer.

⁴You know how it has been from of old,
 since man was placed on earth,

⁵that the triumph of the wicked is short
 and the joy of the godless is but a moment.

⁶Though his pride reach to the heavens
 and his head touch the clouds,

⁷he vanishes like a phantom;
 those who have seen him ask where he is.

⁸Like a dream he takes flight,
 like a vision of the night.

⁹The eye that met him sees him no more;
 neither shall his dwelling shelter him again.

¹¹His youthful frame that was full of vigor
 shall at last lie with him in the dust.

¹²Evil was sweet in his mouth,
 and he hid it under his tongue,

¹³He liked it and did not let it go
 and still kept it within his mouth,

¹⁴yet his food turns sour
 and becomes venom in his stomach.

¹⁵He vomits the riches he swallowed;
 God compels his belly to belch it out.

¹⁶Because he sucked the poison of a viper,
 he will be killed by the fangs of an adder.

¹⁷He will no longer see the streams of oil,
 no rivers of honey and milk.

¹⁸He gives back the fruit of his toil: he
 could not swallow it.

¹⁹For he has oppressed the poor
 and seized houses instead of building them.

¹⁰His children must make amends to
 his victims;
 his own hands must pay back his riches.

²⁰For his greed had no limit,
 and no one could escape his appetite;

²¹he devoured them, one and all.

This is why his prosperity will not endure.

²²In the midst of plenty, distress seizes
 him,
 the full force of misery falls upon him.
²³When his belly is filled God unloads
 his wrath upon him

and pelts him with his arrows.

²⁴While he flees from an iron weapon,
 the bronze bow strikes him down.

²⁵A dart sticks in his back,
 in his liver an arrow.

He is in the grip of a terrible fear;

²⁶total darkness has been stored for him,
 a fire which he did not kindle devours
 him and consumes whatever was left in his
 tent.

²⁷The heavens will expose his guilt;
 the earth will rise up against him.

²⁸A flood will sweep away his house,
 the waters of God's wrath.

²⁹Such is the fate of the wicked—
 their lot which comes from God.

21 ¹Job replied:

²Listen at least to my words,
 enough of your consolation.

³Bear with me while I speak;
 and then you can mock.

⁴Is my grudge against humans?
 Why then should I not be impatient?

⁵Look at me and be appalled;
 cover your mouth for a moment.

⁶When I think about this I am troubled
 and trembling seizes my body.

Job: It's well for the wicked!

• ⁷Why do the wicked live,
 increase in age and in power?

⁸Their descendants flourish in their sight,
 their kinsfolk and their offspring.

⁹Their homes are safe, free from fear;
 they do not feel the scourge of God.

Jer 12:1;
 Mal 3:15

• **21.7** Here, too, we recognize Jeremiah's complaint in 12:1 and the questions raised in Psalm 73. In the Old Testament the just are scandalized by the prosperity of the wicked,

because it seems to deny God's justice. Is it true, as we sometimes hear, that death is the ultimate justice?

- ¹⁰Their bulls breed without fail;
their cows calve and do not miscarry.
¹¹They have children as they have lambs
their little ones dance like deer.
¹²They sing to the rhythm of timbrel and harp;
make merry to the sound of the flute.
¹³They live out their days in happiness
and go down to Sheol in peace.
¹⁴Yet they said to God, “Go away!
We have no desire to learn your way.
¹⁵Who is the Almighty that we should serve him?
What will it profit us if we pray to him?”
¹⁶Though they planned everything far from God
prosperity is in their hands.
¹⁷How often is their lamp put out?
How often does calamity befall them?
How often does God’s anger wipe them out?
¹⁸How often are they like straw before the wind,
like chaff which the storm sweeps away?
¹⁹You say, “His children will pay for his sin.”
Let the man himself pay for his iniquity;
²⁰let his own eyes see his misfortune;
let him drink the wrath of the Almighty!
²¹What does he care about his family when he dies,
when his months have been cut off?

Is 5:12;
Am 6:5Jer
25:10

Ps 1:4

20:5;
Dt 24:16;
Ezk 18:4

- ²²Can anyone teach God knowledge,
since he judges even the highest?
²³One man dies in full vigor,
at ease and completely secure;
²⁴full and nourished is his figure,
rich in marrow are his bones.
²⁵Another dies in bitterness,
never having enjoyed happiness.
²⁶But in the dust they lie down
side by side, covered with worms.
²⁷I know your thoughts fully
and your schemes about me.
²⁸For you say, “Where is the house of
the great prince?
Where is the tent of the wicked?”
²⁹Have you never asked the travelers,
or have you misunderstood what they
say—
³⁰that the evil man is spared from calamity,
delivered from the day of God’s fury?

Ps 73:5

- ³¹Who will denounce his conduct to his
face
or pay him back for what he has done?
³²When people have carried him to the
grave his image watches from his tomb. Lk 16:22
³³The soft earth is sweet to him;
behind him you see everyone follow
and before him a countless horde.
³⁴How then can you console me with
your nonsense?
Pure falsehood is all you have said.

Eliphaz: Can we be of any use to God?

- 22** ¹Eliphaz the Temanite replied:
²Can we be of any use to God?
Only himself a wise man benefits.

- ³What would the Almighty gain if you were upright?
What profit if you were blameless in your ways?

• **22.3** Eliphaz’ speeches are repetitious: if Job suffers, it is because he has sinned. He must have oppressed his neighbor in spite of his repu-

tation for integrity. Yet, note the list of sins that Job might have committed: it is always a matter of oppressing the weak or failing to assist them.

⁴Is it for your piety that he reproves and brings you to judgment?

⁵Is it not for your great wickedness, for there is no end to your sins?

Dt
24:10;
Ezk
18:12

⁶Without any need you kept your kinsmen's goods and stripped them naked of their clothing.

Mt
25:42;
Is 58:7

⁷You denied drink to the thirsty and withheld bread from the hungry.

⁸The powerful control the land and allot it to their cronies.

⁹You have sent widows away empty-handed

and crushed the arms of orphans.

¹⁰No wonder snares are round about you and sudden terror makes you dismayed,

¹¹you are blinded by darkness and covered by flood.

¹²Is not God above the heavens? See how lofty are the highest stars.

Ecl 5:1

¹³Yet you say, "What does God know? Can he see through deep shadows?"

¹⁴He cannot see for thick clouds veil him as he walks upon the vault of the heavens."

¹⁵Will you keep to the old path that the wicked have trod?

¹⁶In a moment they were carried off and their foundation washed away.

¹⁷They said to God, "Away from us! What can the Almighty do to us?"

¹⁸He had filled their houses with good things,

but the thoughts of the wicked were far from him.

¹⁹The righteous see their ruin and are glad,

the innocent laugh at them and say,

²⁰"Now the great have come to nothing, fire has devoured their heritage."

²¹Come to terms with God and make peace;

in this way you will prosper.

²²Listen to his teaching

and keep his words in your heart.

²³If you return humbled to the Almighty, if you drive injustice from your tent,

²⁴then you will look on gold as dust, gold of Ophir as pebbles from a stream.

Mt 6:19

²⁵For the Almighty will be your gold and your sparkling silver.

²⁶For then you will delight in the Almighty and lift up your face to God.

²⁷You will pray to him and he will hear, and you will fulfill your vows.

²⁸You will succeed in your decision, and light will shine upon your way.

²⁹For God brings down the proud and saves the downcast.

Is 57:11

³⁰He who rescues the innocent, will rescue you too if your hands are clean.

23 • ¹Job answered and said:
²Again today, my complaint is rebellious;

I groan under his heavy hand.

³If only I knew where to find him, if only I could go to his dwelling,

⁴I would bring my case before him and lay out in full my arguments.

⁵I would find out his answer and understand what he would say.

⁶Would he need great power to debate with me?

No! he needs only to listen!

⁷He would know the complainant to be an upright man

and I would be free of my judge.

⁸But if I go eastward, he is not there; if I go westward, I still cannot see him.

⁹Seeking him in the north, I do not find him;

looking for him in the south, he is not there.

¹⁰But he knows my every step, and I will come out as gold in his test.

¹¹I have always walked along his path; I have kept his ways and not turned aside.

¹²I have not departed from his commands, instead, I have treasured his words.

¹³But who can oppose once he has decided?

Jesus will say nothing new when, in Matthew 25:40 he condemns to eternal punishment those who failed to provide bread and water to those in need.

The commentary on verses 29-30 can be found with Isaiah 2:6-22.

• **23.1** Job comes back to what he had already said: there is something tormenting reli-

gious people: to know that God is always looking at us and yet never be able to find him. This was commented for Chapter 7: Job personifies those who do not know Christ and have not felt "how good the Lord is towards those who serve him with love." The same rebellion is found in many atheists today: they reject the idea of a God who watches them only to punish their faults.

He does what he desires.
¹⁴He will carry out his decree
 and other plans laid out for me.
¹⁵That is why I am terrified
 when I think of all this.

¹⁶God has made me lose courage;
 the Almighty has made me afraid,
¹⁷but I am not silenced by darkness,
 by the thick gloom that covers my
 face.

Why does God not ask?

24

• ¹Why is what happens hidden from God?
 Why do his faithful never see his justice?

²The wicked remove landmarks
 and steal both flocks and shepherds.

Dt 19:14

³They seize the orphan's ass
 and for a pledge take the widow's ox.

Dt
 24:17

⁴The needy stay far from the road,
 the poor go into hiding.

⁵Like wild asses in the wasteland,
 they look for food;
 the poor toil in the night,

there is no food for their children!

⁶They gather fodder in the fields,
 work in the vineyards of the wicked.

⁷Destitute, they lie down naked,
 shivering in the freezing cold.

Dt 24:12

⁸Drenched with mountain rains,
 they hug the rocks for lack of shelter.

⁹The fatherless child is snatched from the breast,
 the infant of the poor seized for a debt.

¹⁰Without clothes, they go naked,
 starving as they carry the sheaves.

Pro 8:27

¹¹Between the millstones they crush olives;
 they tread the wine press but suffer thirst.

¹²In the city the dying groan,
 and the wounded cry out for help
 but God pays no attention.

20:29

¹³Many rebel against the light,
 they do not know its way or stay in its path.

• ¹⁴When dawn breaks, the murderer rises
 to kill the poor and the helpless.

¹⁵The adulterer waits for dusk,
 thinking that no eye watches him.
 At night the thief walks about
 and puts a mask over his face,
¹⁶ready to break into the houses

• **24.1** A terrible accusation against God who keeps silent when the oppressed are before him. Few prophets expressed the horror of human evil more forcefully.

The poor go into hiding (v. 4). It is a fact that the media has made us more aware of universal misery and, doubtless, we see there a result of the Gospel. It is a fact that this trend has affected also other religions, which have opened up

in recent years. Every country hides its poor and the rich are separated so that they rarely meet the poor, and consequently ignore them. That would be nothing if God did not also appear to forget the poor (and accept that his Church so easily forgets to bring them the Gospel).

• 14. This paragraph seems to be out of place here. The God of light allows the presence of

that he chose during the day.

¹⁷Morning is their darkest hour
the time for them to fear.

¹⁸The wicked are foam on the face of
the waters;

their portion of the land is cursed,
and no one goes to their vineyards.

¹⁹As drought and heat snap up the
thawed snow,

so Sheol swallows up the sinner,
²⁰and the womb which formed him,

forgets him.

Evil men are no longer remembered,
like a fallen tree they are broken.

²¹They preyed on the barren, childless
woman,

and showed no kindness to the widow.

²²But the powerful stands against
them and drags away the mighty.

²³He may let them feel secure,
but his eyes are upon their ways.

²⁴They are momentarily exalted, and
then gone;

they wither and fade like a weed.
They are cut off like heads of grain.

²⁵If this is not so, who can prove me wrong
and reduce my words to nothing?

25 • ¹Then Bildad the Shuhite
answered:

²His is dominion and awesome power,
he who establishes peace in the heavens.

³Can his armies be numbered?
Upon whom does his light not rise?

⁴How can man be righteous before God?
How can one born of woman be pure?

⁵Even the moon is not bright
nor are the stars pure in his sight—

⁶how much less man—this insect,
the human—a worm?

26 • ⁵The shades of the deep are terrified,
the waters and their inhabitants
tremble.

⁶Sheol is naked before God;
destruction lies uncovered.

⁷Over the void he spreads out the
northern skies;

over emptiness he suspends the earth.

⁸He wraps up the waters in his clouds,
yet the clouds do not burst their seams.

⁹He covers the face of the moon
and spreads his clouds over it.

¹⁰On the face of the waters he draws
the horizon as a boundary between light
and darkness.

¹¹The pillars of the heavens quake,
stunned at his thunderous rebuke.

¹²By his power he stilled the sea;
by his wisdom he smote Rahab.

¹³By his wind the skies were cleared;
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

¹⁴These are but hints of his power;
a whisper is all that we hear of him.

But who can understand the thunder of
his might?

• ¹ Job answered then:

²What help have you given to the
powerless,

what strength to the enfeebled arm?

³What advice have you offered to the
foolish,

and what great insight have you
shown?

⁴Who has inspired in you these words?

Whose spirit spoke from your mouth?

27 ¹ Job continued his discourse:
²As surely as God lives, who denies
my right,

the Almighty, who has made me bitter,

³as long as I have life within me

and God's breath in my nostrils,

⁴my lips will not speak falsehood
nor my tongue utter deceit.

⁵Never will I admit you are right,
nor deny my integrity till I die.

dark areas on earth, where the children of darkness are at work.

Paragraph 24:18-23 would be better located after 27:23.

• **25.1** Bildad offers a new presentation of the splendor of the world. The people of that time still had very primitive ideas about the origin of the world. They accepted the legends of neighboring people, the Canaanites and the Chaldeans, who presented the universe as organized by the gods after they had destroyed the monsters of chaos. For centuries, the Jews

kept these images; they were satisfied to remove from the legends the references to pagan gods and spoke of a first victory of Yahweh at the beginning of the world. See also Isaiah 51:9.

The first chapter of Genesis was written after these poems. There the notion of God-Creator is purified: God created everything from the beginning and he did so by his word alone.

• **26.5** Paragraph 26:1-4 comes at the end of Chapter 26.

• 1. Job remarks ironically: What does all this have to do with the point of the discussion?

⁶Never will I let go of my righteousness;
 my conscience is not put to shame.
⁷Let my enemy be as the wicked
 and my adversary as the unrighteous.
⁸For what hope has the godless
 when God cuts him off,
 when God takes away his life?
⁹God will not listen to his call
 when he is beset by trouble.
¹⁰For he did not delight in the Almighty
 or call upon him constantly.
¹¹See, I tell you the deeds of God
 and do not conceal the ways of the
 Almighty.
¹²You have witnessed this yourselves.
 Why then these empty words?
¹³This is a wicked man's portion from God,
 the heritage of an oppressor
 which he receives from the Almighty.
¹⁴Though his children be many,
 the sword is their destiny.

His offspring will go hungry.
¹⁵The plague will bury those who
 survive,
 and their widows will not mourn for them.
¹⁶He may heap up silver like dust
 and pile up clothes like clay,
¹⁷but what he stores, the just will wear,
 and the innocent divide his silver.
¹⁸He builds his house like a cobweb,
 or like the hut a watchman makes.
¹⁹Once more he lies down rich
 and wakes to see his wealth all gone.
²⁰Terrors rush upon him by day;
 at night a whirlwind carries him away.
²¹The east wind lifts him up, and he dis-
 appears
 as it sweeps him out of his place.
²²People strike at him without mercy
 as he flees headlong from their hands.
²³They clap their hands in mockery
 and hiss at him from where they are.

The miners praise the wisdom of God

28

• ¹There is a silver mine
 and a place where gold is refined.
²Iron is taken from earth
 and copper is smelted from ore.
³Trying to conquer darkness,
 piercing to the uttermost depths
 in darkness for the gloomy stone,
⁴strange people cut a shaft
 in places remote and long forgotten,
 and there they labor, dangling and swaying.
⁵The earth which produces food
 is plowed up as if by fire.
⁶Sapphires come from its rocks,
 gold nuggets from its dust.
⁷No bird of prey knows the hidden path,
 no falcon's eye has seen it yet.
⁸No proud beast has trodden it,
 no prowling lion has passed over it.
⁹Man attacks the flinty rocks,
 upturns mountains by their roots.
¹⁰Tunneling through earth's layers,
 he sees all its treasures.
¹¹He searches the source of rivers,
 and brings hidden things to light.

Dt 6:9

• **28.1** This poem marks an interval and a
 break after Job's discussion with his friends.
 Miners know how to look for hidden treasures

inside hills: gold, silver and precious stones. But
 who will look for God's wisdom? We find some-
 thing similar in Baruch 3:15-30.

Ecl 7:24;
Bar 3:15

¹²But where does wisdom come from?
Where does understanding dwell?

¹³Man has known no way to wisdom;
it is not found in the land of the living.

¹⁴The deep says, "It is not in me";
the sea says, "It is not with me."

¹⁵It cannot be purchased with the finest gold,
nor can its price be weighed in silver.

¹⁶It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir,
nor with precious onyx or sapphire.

¹⁷It is beyond comparison with gold or crystal;
its worth is unmatched by any golden vessel.

¹⁸Not worth mentioning are coral and jasper;
the price of wisdom is above the biggest pearl.

¹⁹The topaz of Cush cannot equal it;
it cannot be valued in pure gold.

²⁰Where then does wisdom come from?
Where does understanding dwell?

²¹It is hidden from the eyes of all the living,
concealed from the birds in the sky.

²²Destruction and Death can only say,
"We have heard of it."

²³God alone knows the way to wisdom,
his eye enters its dwelling place.

²⁴When he looked to the ends of the earth,
and watched everything under the heavens,

²⁵when he gave the wind its force
and measured out the waters,

²⁶when he set a bound for the rain
and a way for the thunder and lightning,

²⁷then he looked at wisdom and appraised it;
he established it, knowing it in depth.

²⁸And to humans he said:

The fear of the Lord is wisdom;
avoiding evil is understanding.

Bar 3:32

Is 40:12

Whoever listened to me, spoke well of me

29 • ¹Job continued his discourse:

²Oh, that I were in months gone by,
in the days when God watched over me,

• **29.1** In Chapters 29–31 Job presents his defense and he assumes the role of the just one who is envied and slandered. As long as people

are lucky they are esteemed, but if they run into misfortune, everyone suddenly looks at them differently. A secret instinct urges people to find

³when his light shone upon my head
 and I walked with it through darkness.
⁴Oh, that I were in my prime,
 when God's friendship blessed my home,
⁵when the Almighty was still with me
 and my children were around me,
⁶when milk bathed my footsteps
 and olive oil flowed from the rock.
⁷When I went to the city gate
 and took up my seat in the square
⁸the young men stepped aside
 and the old men rose to their feet;
⁹the chief men dared not speak
 but laid their hands on their mouths;
¹⁰the princes were silenced,
 their tongues stuck to the palate.
²¹They listened to me and waited in silence
 for my counsel.

Lev
19:32

²²Once I spoke they said no more,
 but drop by drop my words kept falling on them.
²³They waited for me as people wait for showers;
 they drank in my words as spring rain.
²⁴If I smiled at them, they did not dare believe it;
 not a glance of mine was lost.
²⁵I pointed out the way, as a leader
 and took a king's place among the troops.
 Wherever I led them, they went.

Dt 32:2

¹¹Whoever heard me, spoke well of me,
 and those who saw me commended me,
¹²for I rescued the poor who cried for help,
 the fatherless and the unassisted.
¹³I was blessed by the dying man;
 I turned to peace the widow's pining.
¹⁴I was wearing my honesty like a garment,
 my integrity was my robe and turban.
¹⁵I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame,
¹⁶father to the needy, the stranger's advocate.
¹⁷I broke the jaws of the wicked,
 and from his teeth forced out the prey.

a scapegoat in the midst of misfortune in the community. Inordinate respect returns and envy gives way to persecution.

Paradoxically, it is Job's defense that shows the flaws in his integrity. *I was wearing my honesty like a garment* (v. 14). Job was delighted to do good. He was a "just" man, aware of being just and he gave thanks to God who made him good.

All this was nothing more than the justice and the merits of the Pharisee. Very respectful of a distant God, Job built up his life, his virtues and his good self-image alone. In the end, his perfection did not exist in God's eyes because, without saying so, he made himself God's rival.

¹⁸I said to myself: "I will die old,
my days as many as the grains of sand.
¹⁹My roots will reach to the water;
at night my branches will be wet with dew.
²⁰My glory will remain fresh,
the bow ever strong in my grip."

30 ¹And now I am the laughing-stock
of people much younger
whose fathers I considered unfit
to put with the dogs of my flock.
²Not even their arms were helpful to me
for all their vigor had gone,
³worn out by hunger and want.
They roamed the parched wasteland,
⁴they gathered salt herbs from the
brushwood,
their food was the roots of the broom plant.
⁵They were banished by their fellowmen
who shouted at them as if they were
thieves.
⁶They were forced to seek a home in caves,
among the ravines and rock crevices.
⁷They brayed among the bushes
and huddled in the underbrush.
⁸They were driven from the land
for being base and senseless.
⁹And now their sons sing of my disgrace;
I have become a byword among them.
¹⁰They do not hesitate to spit before me;
they abhor me and keep their distance.
¹¹Seeing that God has unstrung my bow,
they have cast off restraint in my presence.
¹²On my right the rabble rise,
build siege ramps and lay snares.
¹³They attack, with none to restrain them.
¹⁴They advance, as through a wide breach;
they come in waves amid the uproar.
¹⁵Terror grips me;
my dignity is blown by the wind
my safety has vanished like a passing
cloud.

• ¹⁶And now my soul is poured out
because of my days of grief and suffering.

¹⁷At night gnawing pain pierces my
bones.
My veins have no rest.
¹⁸With power God has caught my
garment,
binding me about as the collar of my coat;
¹⁹throwing me into the mire,
where I am now like dust.
²⁰I cry to you, O God, but there's no
answer;
I stand but you merely look on.
²¹You have become cruel to me, you
pursue me
mercilessly with your strong hand.
²²You lift me up and make me ride
till the storm tosses and throws me
down like rain.
²³I know you will bring me down to
death,
the destiny of all the living.
²⁴I did not raise my hand against the
poor
when he cried for help in his disaster.
²⁵Have I not wept for those in trouble?
Has not my soul grieved for the poor?
²⁶But when I looked for good, I
encountered evil;
when I waited for light, darkness came.
²⁷My heart in turmoil is never at peace,
for days of distress have come upon me...
²⁸I go about darkened, but not by the sun;
if I rise in council, it is to voice my grief.
²⁹I have become a brother of jackals,
a companion of owls.
³⁰My skin blackens and peels;
my bones burn with fever.
³¹My harp is tuned to laments,
and my flute to sounds of weeping.

Ecl 12:7

• **30.16** The Book of Job teaches us how much we need the coming of the Son of God. On one hand, as long as God does not present himself openly, we cannot avoid doubting

and resenting him. On the other hand, as long as someone feels he alone is responsible for his own perfection, he cannot feel as a child of God does nor come into the reign of grace.

Have I eaten my food alone?**31**

- ¹ I have made a covenant with my eyes
not even to gaze at a virgin.
- ² For what is man's lot from God on high,
his heritage from the Almighty above?
- ³ Is it not ruin for the wicked,
disaster for the wrongdoer?
- ⁴ Does he not see my ways
and number all my steps?
- ⁵ Have I walked in falsehood?
Have my feet hastened towards deceit?
- ⁶ Let me be weighed in honest scales,
that God may know I am guiltless.
- ⁷ If my steps have turned from the way
and my heart's desire has gone astray,
if my hands have been stained,
- ⁸ then may others eat what I have sown,
or may my crops be stricken down.
- ⁹ If I have been enticed by a woman,
if I have lurked at my neighbor's door,
¹⁰ then may my wife grind for another,
and may other men sleep with her.
- ¹¹ (For that is enough to make one ashamed,
a crime that should be utterly condemned.)
- ¹² For it is a fire that burns to destruction;
it would have consumed all my possessions.
- ¹³ If I have denied justice to my servants
when they had a grievance against me,
¹⁴ what would I do when confronted by God?
What would I answer when called to account?
- ¹⁵ No less than I, they too were formed in the womb
by the same God who formed us all within our mothers.
- ¹⁶ Have I denied anything to the poor,
or allowed the widow's eyes to languish?
- ¹⁷ Have I eaten my food alone,
not sharing it with the fatherless?
- ¹⁸ No! since youth I have fostered him,
and from my mother's womb, I have guided the widow.

Sir 9:5

Pro 6:25

21:2

• **31.1** Job looks at his behavior according to the law of God as it is presented in many pages of the Old Testament: a law of goodness and honesty centered on concern for one's neighbor. In a world with a very modest standard of living, those lucky enough not to lack

anything had the obligation of sharing with the less fortunate. The most serious sin was the lack of social solidarity.

In Job's examination of conscience the sin of idolatry appears (vv. 26-28). This, however, plays a minor role.

¹⁹Have I seen a man cold and shivering,
 destitute, in need of clothing,
²⁰who did not bless me from his heart
 for giving him the warmth of my fleece?
²¹If I have raised my hand against the orphan,
 trusting in my power and influence,
²²then let my shoulder fall from its socket,
 let my arm be broken at the joint.
²³For I feared God-sent calamity,
 and how could I stand in his presence?
²⁴If I have put my trust in gold
 or have sought my security from it,
²⁵if I have gloated over my wealth,
 my fortune and accomplishments,
²⁶if I have regarded the sun in its radiance
 or the moon in its splendor,
²⁷and having been enticed offered them
 a kiss of my hand in homage,
²⁸then these also would be sins to judge
 for I would have been unfaithful to God.

²⁹Have I rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune
 or gloated over disaster that came his way?
³⁰I have not even allowed my mouth to sin
 by invoking a curse against him.

³¹Those of my household used to say,
 "Who has not been fed with Job's meat?"

³²No sojourner ever spent the night in the street,
 for my door was always open to wayfarers.

Pro
24:17

Is 58:10

Gen
19:2

Heb
2:11

Gen
3:18

³⁸If my land has cried against me
 and its furrows wept
³⁹because I have eaten its fruits
 unjustly
 after getting rid of its owners,
⁴⁰let thorns grow instead of wheat
 and weeds in the place of barley.
³³Have I, out of human weakness,
 hidden my sins and concealed guilt in
 my heart,
³⁴keeping silent by myself,

because I feared the crowd and their
 contempt?

³⁵Oh, that I had someone to hear me!
 Let the Almighty answer! This is my plea.
 Let my accuser write his indictment
³⁶and I will wear it on my shoulder,
 or bind it round my head like a turban.
³⁷I would give him an account of my
 every step,
 and go as boldly as a prince to meet him.
This is the end of the words of Job.

• **32.1** The intervention of Elihu marks the beginning of a new part of the poems, inserted later and placed in Chapters 32–37.

Elihu's discourses add little to previous discussion. Elihu has nevertheless his point of view. It seems that for him the discussion so far has been rather theoretical. For one part he insists on the pedagogical aspect of the divine work: many situations which seem unjust to us cease to be so provided we go beyond our first impres-

sions. He also holds that even if God does not show himself, he knows how to communicate his counsels:

– You ask where your faults are, but perhaps God has warned you in a thousand ways and you have not taken it into account (33:13–18).

– You despair in your illness, but perhaps God wants to teach you: you did not invoke him when all was going well (35:8–13).

Elihu senses that there is something false in

SECOND PART: ELIHU INTERVENES

32 • ¹The three men made no further reply to Job, because in his own eyes, Job was in the right. ²But Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became angry with Job for justifying himself before God. ³He was also angry with the three friends for their failure to refute Job, because they had allowed God to be condemned. ⁴Because they were older than he, Elihu had bided his time; ⁵but when the three gave up the argument, his anger burst out. ⁶Thus Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, spoke:

I am young and you are quite old;
therefore I was timid and afraid
and dared not tell you of what I know.
⁷“Age should speak,” I thought;
“advanced years should teach wisdom.”
⁸But it is the spirit in man,
the breath of the Almighty,
that makes him understand.
⁹It is not the old alone who are wise,
nor the aged who understand what is
right.

¹⁰Therefore I said: Listen,
let me also show my knowledge.

¹¹I waited for you to speak,
listening for your reasons,
as you searched for words.

¹²I gave you my full attention
but none of you has proved Job wrong,
none has refuted his arguments.

¹³Stop saying, “We have met wisdom;
God has instructed us, not man.”

¹⁴I will not resume your argument
or answer Job with your reasoning.

¹⁵They keep quiet for they are dismayed
and have nothing more to say.

¹⁶Must I wait, now that they are silent,
making no effort to reply?

¹⁷I, too, will show my knowledge.

¹⁸For I am full of words
and prodded on by the spirit.

¹⁹I am like bottled-up wine,
or a wineskin bursting with wine.

²⁰I have to speak to find relief,
open my lips and make reply.

²¹I will be partial to no one
and will not flatter anyone.

²²For if I were skilled in flattery,
my Maker would soon do away with me.

Mt 9:17

Have you heard God’s warning?

33 • ¹So now, O Job, hear my
discourse,

listen to everything I say.

²My words are on the tip of my tongue,

³words from an upright heart,
words full of knowledge and sincerity.

⁴The spirit of God has made me;
the breath of the Almighty keeps me

alive.

⁵Answer me if you can;

draw up your arguments and take your
stand.

⁶Like yourself, I too have been taken
by God from the same clay.

⁷Thus no fear of me need alarm you,
nor should my presence lie heavy on
you.

⁸But I heard what you said,
none of your words escaped my hearing:

⁹“I am clean and without sin;

I am innocent, guiltless.

¹⁰Yet God has found fault with me
and considers me his enemy;

¹¹he shackles my feet,
keeps watch of all my paths.”

¹²I tell you, you are wrong in this,
for greater than man is God.

¹³Why then do you complain
that he will answer none of your words?

¹⁴See, God gives a warning
but does not repeat it a second time.

¹⁵In a dream, in a night vision,
when deep sleep falls on people,
while they slumber in their beds,

Ps
104:30Is 11:2;
Dn
13:45

Wis 4:8

Job’s righteousness, but he does not know what it is. He looks for secret sins that Job might have committed. The fact is that what Job lacks is evangelical justice which is the humble love of God.

• **33.1** Elihu says to Job: you think you are innocent, but surely you have not paid attention to God’s warnings. In spite of the fact that God cannot be reached by humans, he communicates through dreams, inspirations, encour-

ters. God also corrects by way of the advice of other people who are his messengers, called here “angels,” “mediators.” We know that angel means messenger. The very one who complains about God fails to see, to listen and to accept the messages God sends through the reprimands and advice given us by others who correct us in a loving way.

Elihu shows how trials are a lesson in humility for all (36:1-21).

¹⁶It is then he opens their ears and gives warning by terrifying them.

¹⁷So he turns man from wrongdoing and keeps him away from pride,

¹⁸God preserves his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.

¹⁹Man is also chastened on his bed by pain

and constant distress upon his frame, ²⁰so that he finds food repulsive, even the choicest meal loathsome.

²¹His flesh wastes away to naught; his bones, once unseen, now protrude.

²²His soul draws near to the pit, and his life to the place of death.

²³Yet if there is an angel by his side— a mediator, one in a thousand— to show him what is right for man, to give him justice once again, ²⁴God will have mercy on him and say, “Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found for him a ransom.”

²⁵Then his flesh will be renewed as a child’s, restored as in the days of his youth.

²⁶He will pray and find favor with God; he will see God’s face and rejoice.

²⁷He will witness to men and say, “I sinned and perverted what was right, but I was not punished as I deserved.

²⁸He rescued my soul from going down into the pit, and gave me life to enjoy the light.”

²⁹God does all this to man— twice, even thrice—

³⁰to turn him back from the pit, to lead him with the light of life.

³¹Pay attention, Job, listen to me; be silent, and I will continue to speak.

³²But if you have anything to say, say it then;

speak up, for I wish to see you justified.

³³If not, then do listen;

be silent as I teach you wisdom.

34 ¹Elihu continued speaking: ²Hear my words, you, the wise; listen to me, you, who know.

³The ear tests the word, as the palate tastes the food.

⁴Let us discern what is right, learn between us what is good.

⁵Job has said, “I am innocent, but God denies me justice

⁶and disregards my right.

Though guiltless, my wound is hopeless.”

⁷Who is like Job, who drinks in blasphemies like water?

⁸He keeps company with evildoers and follows the path of the wicked.

⁹For has he not said, “It does not profit a man

if he tries to please God?”

¹⁰So hear me, you men of understanding, far be it from God to do evil, far from the Almighty to do wrong!

¹¹Rather, he repays man for what he has done;

he gives him what his conduct deserves.

¹²How unthinkable that God would do wrong,

that the Almighty would pervert justice!

¹³Who gave him charge over the earth? Who else laid out the whole world?

¹⁴If he were to take back his spirit, to withdraw his breath to himself,

¹⁵all flesh would perish together and man would return to dust.

¹⁶If you have any intelligence, listen, Job, hear what I say.

¹⁷Can an enemy of justice govern?

Or do you condemn him who is mighty and just,

¹⁸who says to kings, “You are worthless,” and to nobles, “You are wicked,”

¹⁹who is impartial to princes and favors not the rich over the poor, for they are all his handiwork?

²⁰They die in a moment, even at midnight;

people are shaken and pass away. Without effort he removes a tyrant.

²¹His eyes keep watch on human’s ways, and he sees their every step.

²²For him there is no dense darkness where evildoers can hide.

²³He forewarns no man of his time to come before God in judgment.

²⁴He shatters the mighty without inquiry, and sets in his place another strongman.

²⁵Because he knows their evil deeds, he turns at night and crushes them.

²⁶He punishes them for their wickedness in a judgment that humans witness.

²⁷For they had turned away from him, heeded none of his ways,

²⁸and oppressed the poor so much that their cries of suffering reached him.

²⁹If he remains silent, who stirs him up? If he hides his face, who can see him?

Yet he watches man and nation alike,

Ps62:13;
Pro24:12;
Sir16:14;
Mt16:27;
Rom 2:6

Wis
12:16

Gen
18:25

Ps
103:10;
Rom
6:23

12:11

³⁰and restrains those who mislead the people.

³¹If a wicked man says to God,
“I was misguided but will offend no more.

³²Teach me what I do not see;
if I have done wrong, I will do so no more.”

³³In such a case, do you think God will punish?

Speak, you who reject his decisions
and think you know more than I do;
tell us what you know.

³⁴Men of understanding,
wise men who hear my views will say
to me:

³⁵“Job speaks without knowledge;
his words are without insight.

³⁶Let Job be tried to the utmost
for answering as wicked men do!

³⁷To his sin he adds rebellion
by scornfully brushing off our arguments
and multiplying his words against God.”

It is because they did not call on God

35 ¹Elihu continued and said:
²Do you presume you are right
and innocent before God,
³when you say, “What is it to you,
am I doing you harm with my sins?”
⁴I will answer you and your friends as well.
⁵Look up to the sky and see,
gaze at the clouds above.
⁶If you sin, what is that for God?
Do your many offenses hurt him?
⁷If you are just, what do you give him?
Or what does he receive from your
hand?

⁸It’s a man like yourself that your sin
touches,
a son of man that your justice affects.

⁹People cry out when greatly
oppressed;
they plead for relief under the tyrant’s reign.

Ecd 12:1 ¹⁰But no one says, “Where is God, my
Maker,
whose songs of jubilation are heard in
the night,

Mt 6:26 ¹¹who teaches us through the beasts of
the earth,
who makes us wise through the birds
of the air?”

¹²This is why he does not answer when
they cry out:

because of man’s arrogance.

¹³In vain! God does not listen,
the Almighty takes no heed of it.

¹⁴How much less then will he listen
when you say you do not see him and wait,
for your case is before him!

¹⁵And you say that though he is angry
he does not know how to punish
for he has taken no notice of wickedness.

¹⁶So Job opens his mouth in empty talk,
without knowledge he multiplies words.

God tests humans to correct them

36 ¹Elihu proceeded further:
²Bear with me a little and I will
explain,

for I have more to say on God’s behalf.

³I will spread my knowledge afar
to do justice to my Maker.

⁴Be assured that my words are not false,
for you have before you an enlightened
man.

⁵God is mighty indeed
but he does not despise the pure of heart.

⁶He cuts off the power of the sinner
and restores the right of the oppressed,

⁷he does not forsake their claim.

He sets kings on their thrones
and makes them firm forever.

But if they raise themselves in pride,

⁸he has them bound with fetters
and held fast by bonds of affliction.

⁹Then he tells them what they have done,
all their sins and arrogance.

¹⁰He opens their ears to correction
and exhorts them to repentance.

¹¹If they obey and serve him,
they spend their days in prosperity
and their years in contentment.

¹²But if they do not listen, they go to the
grave:

knowledge would have saved them.

¹³These hypocrites harbor resentment:
they do not pray for help in their bonds,

¹⁴therefore they die in their youth
and perish among the reprobate.

¹⁵God saves the wretched through their
suffering,

God instructs the unfortunate.

¹⁶In like manner, he brings you from
distress

to a free and broad space,
to a table filled with rich food.

¹⁷Then you will judge the wicked;
justice and judgment will be yours.

¹⁸Take care lest you be seduced by
generosity;

do not yield to arrogance, bribery and
corruption.

¹⁹Your wealth and all your mighty efforts will not bail you out of distress.

²⁰Do not long for the coming of night to drag people away from their homes.

²¹Beware of turning to iniquity; because of it you have been tried by affliction.

A hymn to God's greatness

• ²²God is exalted in his power. What teacher is there like him?

²³Who has prescribed his ways for him, or said to him that he has done wrong?

²⁴Remember to extol his work, of which many have sung.

²⁵Everyone has seen it; all gaze on it from afar.

²⁶God is great beyond our understanding; the number of his years is past reckoning.

²⁷He holds in check the water drops which distill from the mist as rain,

²⁸then the clouds pour them down and drop them upon the earth as showers.

³¹This is the way he nourishes the land that provides food in abundance.

²⁹Who can understand how he spreads the clouds, how he thunders from his pavilion?

³⁰He unfurls his mists and covers the expanse of the sea.

³²With both hands he lifts up lightning and commands it to strike the target.

³³His thunder warns the shepherd and the flock senses the tempest.

37 ¹This is why my heart pounds and leaps from its place.

²Listen to the thunder of his voice as it comes rumbling from his mouth.

³Under the heavens, he hurls his lightning, sending it to the ends of the earth.

⁴Then comes the sound of God's roar—the majestic peal of his thunder.

He does not check his thunderbolts until his voice has fully resounded.

⁵God thunders and his voice works marvels;

he does great things we cannot perceive.

⁶He says to the snow, "Fall on the earth"; and to the showers, "Be a strong downpour!"

⁷So he keeps people under cover to let them acknowledge his work.

⁸Wild beasts go back into their lairs and remain quietly in their dens.

⁹The storm comes out from its chamber, and the cold from the driving winds.

¹⁰The breath of God forms ice, and the broad waters become frozen.

¹¹With thunderbolts he loads the clouds, and through them scatters his lightning.

¹²At his direction they do their rounds, upon the face of the habitable world,

¹³whether for punishment or mercy as he commands.

¹⁴Listen to this, O Job: pause and consider God's marvels.

¹⁵Do you know how he controls the clouds,

how he makes his lightning flash?

¹⁶Do you know how the clouds hang poised,

all these wonders wrought by his perfect knowledge?

¹⁷You who swelter in your clothes when the earth lies still under the south wind,

¹⁸can you, like him, spread out the skies, hard as a mirror of molten bronze?

¹⁹Teach us then what we shall say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of darkness.

²⁰Does it take an angel to bring this to God's attention?

²¹A while ago we could not see the light and the clouds darkened the sky, but the storm has just cast them out.

²²A blaze comes from the north, a dreadful glory around God.

²³The Almighty is beyond our reach; exalted in power, great in judgment; the Master of justice oppresses no one.

²⁴Therefore, people revere him; the wise are nothing in his sight.

Dn 7:9

• **36.22** This second poem on the greatness of God concludes Elihu's speeches just as the poem of the miners concluded the discourses of Job's three friends.

Yahweh answers Job

38

- ¹Then Yahweh answered Job out of the storm:
 - ²Who is this that obscures divine plans
with ignorant words?
 - ³Gird up your loins like a man;
I will question you and you must answer.
 - ⁴Where were you when I founded the earth?
Answer, and show me your knowledge.
 - ⁵Do you know who determined its size,
who stretched out its measuring line? Is 40:12
 - ⁶On what were its bases set?
Who laid its cornerstone,
 - ⁷while the morning stars sang together
and the heavenly beings shouted for joy? Bar 3:34
 - ⁸Who shut the sea behind closed doors
when it burst forth from the womb,
 - ⁹when I made the clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling clothes;
 - ¹⁰when I set its limits
with doors and bars in place,
 - ¹¹when I said, “You will not go beyond these bounds;
here is where your proud waves must halt?”
 - ¹²Have you ever commanded the morning,
or shown the dawn its place, Ps74:16
 - ¹³that it might grasp the earth by its edges
and shake the wicked out of it,
 - ¹⁴when it takes a clay color
and changes its tint like a garment;
 - ¹⁵when the wicked are denied their own light,
and their proud arm is shattered?
 - ¹⁶Have you journeyed to where the sea begins
or walked in its deepest recesses?
 - ¹⁷Have the gates of death been shown to you?
Have you seen the gates of Shadow?
 - ¹⁸Have you an idea of the breadth of the earth?
Tell me, if you know all this.

• **38.1** Yahweh answers Job from within the storm clouds, as on Mount Sinai. He does not explain or justify; rather he does the questioning. He does not show off his own wisdom, but forces humans to admit that they do not know anything.

Here the author seems to be digressing somewhat from his theme. Carried away by his admiration, he forgets that, first of all he intended to

show us God exceeds our ability to understand and to judge. What do our protests and scandals mean: “if God existed...” They are mere childishness, idle words of those who have no idea of what the word “God” encompasses. If the entire universe is just the expression or the irradiation of divine Wisdom, who will dare tell God that his way is not reasonable?

- ¹⁹Where is the way to the home of light,
and where does darkness dwell?
²⁰Can you take them to their own regions,
and set them on their homeward paths?
²¹You know, for you were born before them,
and great is the number of your years!

²²Have you entered the storehouse of
the snow
or seen the storehouse of the hail,
²³which I reserve for times of woe,
for days of war and battle?
²⁴What is the way to the place
where lightning is dispersed,
or the place whence the east wind
begins spreading over the earth?
²⁵Who has cut a channel for the torrents
of rain,
and a path for the thunderstorm,
²⁶to bring rain to no-man's-land
and to the unpeopled wilderness,
²⁷to enrich the wasted and desolate
ground,
to make the desert bloom with green?
²⁸Does the rain have a father?
Who fathers the drops of dew?
²⁹From whose womb comes the ice,
and who gives birth to the frost from the
skies,
³⁰when the waters lie as hard as stone,
when the surface of the deep is frozen?
³¹Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,
or loosen the bonds of Orion?

Is 28:17;
30:30

Am 5:8

³²Can you guide the morning star in its
season,
or lead the Bear with its train?
³³Do you know the laws of the heavens,
and can you establish their rule on
earth?
³⁴Can you raise your voice to the clouds
and order their waters to pour down?
³⁵Will lightning flash at your command
and report to you, "Here we are?"
³⁶Who has given the ibis foresight
or endowed the cock with
foreknowledge?
³⁷Who has the wisdom to count the
clouds?
Who tilts the water jars of heaven
³⁸so that the dust cakes into a mass
and clods of earth stick together?
³⁹Can you hunt the woods to appease
the hunger of the lioness and her
whelps,
⁴⁰as they crouch in their dens
or lie in wait in the thicket?
⁴¹Who provides prey for the raven
when its young cry out to God
and roam about desperate for food?

Ps 147:9

39

- ¹Do you know how mountain goats breed?
Have you observed the hinds in labor,
²numbered the months they must fulfill,
and fixed the time they must give birth?
³Have you watched them end their labor
as they crouch and drop their young,
⁴how they wait for them to grow,
until they leave, never to return?
⁵Who has given the wild ass his freedom,
and loosed the bonds of the wild donkey?
⁶I have given him the desert for a home,
the salt plains for a shelter.
⁷For he scorns the city's tumult,
and is free of the driver's shout and insult;
⁸he prefers the hills for his pasture,
ranging for food in the rich verdure.

- ⁹Is the wild ox willing to serve you,
to pass the night by your manger?
- ¹⁰Can you make him work with a plow or harrow
if you provide him with the proper gear?
- ¹¹Can you rely on his great strength
and leave him to do your heavy work?
- ¹²Can you depend on him to come home alone,
carrying your grain to your threshing floor?
- ¹³Can the wing of the ostrich be compared
with the plumage of the stork or falcon?
- ¹⁴She lays her eggs on the ground
and lets them warm in the sand,
¹⁵not knowing that a foot may step on them
or some wild beast may crush them.
- ¹⁶Cruel to her chicks as if they were not hers,
she cares not that her labor be in vain,
¹⁷for God has given her no wisdom
nor a share of good sense.
- ¹⁸Yet in the swiftness of foot,
she makes sport of horse and rider.
- ¹⁹Is it you who give the horse strength
and clothe his neck with splendor,
²⁰who make him leap like a grasshopper
and his proud snorting strike terror?
- ²¹Rejoicing in his strength, he fiercely paws
and charges into the fray,
²²afraid of nothing, laughing at fear,
not shying away from the sword.
- ²³Against his side rattles the quiver,
along with the lance and flashing spear.
- ²⁴In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground;
there is no holding him when the trumpets sound.
- ²⁵He cries "Hurrah!" at each trumpet blast.
He catches the scent of battle from afar,
the shout of commanders and the battle cry.
- ²⁶Is it by your wisdom that the hawk takes flight
and spreads his wings toward the south?
- ²⁷Is it at your command that eagles fly
and build their nests on high?
- ²⁸They dwell on cliffs and spend the night;
their stronghold is the rocky crag.
- ²⁹From there they look out for food,
which they detect even from afar.
- ³⁰They and their young feast on blood,
and where the slain lie, there they are.

Lm 4:3

Jer 8:7

Mt 24:28

40 • ¹Yahweh said to Job:
²Must a faultfinder contend with
the Almighty?

Let him who would correct God answer.

³Job said:

⁴How can I reply, unworthy as I am!

All I can do is put my hand over my mouth.

⁵I have spoken once, now I will not answer;
oh, yes, twice, but I will do no further.

Yahweh's discourse continues

⁶Then Yahweh addressed Job out of the
storm:

⁷Gird up your loins like a man;

I will question you, and you must answer.

⁸Would you deny my right
and condemn me that you may be jus-
tified?

⁹Have you an arm like that of God,
and can you thunder with a voice like this?

¹⁰Then adorn yourself with glory and
splendor,

array yourself with grandeur and majesty.

¹¹Unleash the fury of your wrath;

¹²look for every proud man and abase him;
crush the wicked where they stand.

¹³Bury them all in the dust,

lock them in the dungeon.

¹⁴If you can do this, I, myself, will
praise you,

admitting that your right hand can save
you.

¹⁵Just think about Behemoth,
who feeds on grass like the ox.

¹⁶What strength he has in his loins,
what power in the muscles of his belly!

¹⁷Like a cedar his tail sways,
the sinews of his thighs are like cables.

¹⁸His bones like tubes of bronze,
his limbs like iron rods.

¹⁹He is first among the works of God,
created to dominate his companions.

²⁰The mountains give him their produce,
as do all the wild beasts who play there.

²¹Under the lotus trees he lies,
hidden among the reeds of the marsh.

²²The lotus trees cover him with their
shade;

the poplar trees on the bank surround
him.

²³He is not alarmed though the river rages
and torrents surge against his mouth.

²⁴Who can capture him by the eyes,
or trap him and pierce his nose?

²⁵Can you pull in Leviathan with a hook,
or curb his tongue with a bit?

²⁶Can you put a ring through his nose
or pierce his jaw with a hook?

²⁷Will he keep begging you for mercy,
or speak to you with tender words?

²⁸Will you make him your slave forever?

²⁹Will you make a pet of him like a bird,
or put him on a leash for your maids?

³⁰Will traders bargain for him?

Will merchants sell him retail?

³¹Can you fill his hide with harpoons
or his head with fish spears?

³²Just try and lay a hand on him—
you will not forget the struggle,
and you will never do it again!

41 ¹Any hope of subduing him is vain,
for the mere sight of him is over-
powering.

²He grows so ferocious when aroused
that no one dares face him.

³Who has attacked him and come off
unharméd?

No one under the sky.

⁴I need hardly mention his limbs, nor
describe his matchless strength.

⁵Who can strip off his outer garment
and penetrate his double breastplate?

⁶Who can dare open the gates of his
mouth

to confront the terrors of his rows of
teeth?

⁷Rows of scales are on his back—
rows of shields that are tightly sealed.

⁸So closely fitted are they
that no space intervenes;

⁹so closely joined
that they hold fast and cannot be parted.

¹⁰Light flashes forth when he sneezes;
like the light of dawn are his eyes.

• **40.1** In questioning Job, Yahweh gets and gives us a few seconds of rest before beginning his second discourse in Chapters 40–41.

In Chapter 40, Behemoth or the hippopotamus appears, enormous, terrible and ugly, eating only plants. Leviathan, the crocodile whose skin resists arrows just like armor. What a pleasure to find in a few pages of the Scriptures a

poetic expression of the beauty of creation. For centuries prophets and priests had to protect Israel from the seduction of nature. Everywhere around them, the wonders of creation gave rise to the worship of natural forces. When the Jews became firmer in their fidelity to God—the Creator of nature but not identified with it—it became possible to sing the praise of nature.

¹¹Flaming torches and sparks of fire flash from his mouth.

¹²Smoke comes from his nostrils, like hot steam from a boiling pot.

¹³His mere breath sets coals afire, with the flame pouring from his mouth.

¹⁴Strength is in his neck, and terror dances before him.

¹⁵Tightly set are the folds of his flesh, firmly cast and immovable.

¹⁶His heart is hard as stone, as hard as the lower millstone.

¹⁷When he rises up, the mighty are terrified,

the waves of the sea fall back.

¹⁸Should the sword reach him, it will not pierce him, nor will the spear, the dart, or the javelin.

¹⁹Iron is to him no more than straw; and bronze, no more than rotten wood.

²⁰Arrows will not put him to flight; a sling-stone tickles him like hay.

²¹Clubs are as splinters to him; he laughs at the whirring javelin.

²²His belly is as sharp as pottery sherds; he moves across the mire like a harrow.

²³He churns the depths into a seething caldron;

he makes the sea fume like a burner.

²⁴Behind him he leaves a white gleaming wake,

making the deep appear a hoary head of age.

^{Ezk 32:2} ²⁵He has no equal on earth:

such a horrible creature he was made!

^{Ezk 29:4} ²⁶He makes all, however lofty, afraid; he is king over all proud beasts.

42 • ¹This was the answer Job gave to Yahweh:

²I know that you are all powerful; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

^{3b}I spoke of things I did not understand, too wonderful for me to know.

⁵My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you.

⁶Therefore I retract all I have said, and in dust and ashes I repent.

The end of Job's poem

• ⁷After Yahweh had spoken to Job, he turned to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends because you have not spoken of me rightly, as has my servant Job. ⁸Now, take seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job, offer a holocaust for yourselves and let him pray for you. I will accept his prayer and excuse your folly in not speaking of me properly as my servant Job has done."

⁹Then Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as Yahweh had ordered. Yahweh accepted Job's intercession.

Here ends the traditional story of Job

¹⁰After Job had prayed for his friends, Yahweh restored his fortunes, giving him twice as much as he had before. ¹¹All his brothers and sisters and his former friends came to his house and dined with him. They showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that Yahweh had brought to him. Each of them gave him a silver coin and a gold ring.

said: Listen and I will speak and question you, and you must answer," were probably added.

• 7. In the last paragraph (42:10-17) we have the conclusion of the popular story of the holy man Job, begun in 1:1-2:13 (see Introduction). Since he preserved his trust, it was rewarded in the end by the just God.

On the contrary, in verses 7-9, we have a difficult merging between this submissive holy man Job and the other character who occupied most of the book, namely, the Job who argues with God. God prefers Job to his friends who consider themselves more religious because they cover up the scandals of existence and the obscurities of faith.

Job is the example of a Christian who courageously looks for an answer to today's problems: my servant Job has spoken properly of me (cf. v. 7).

• **42.1** Here we have the conclusion of the long dialogues in this book.

Now my eyes have seen you (v. 5). Job's questions about suffering and death have not been answered, but now we realize that it was not essential. God has responded. God has revealed himself and Job has begun to live as someone who has been miraculously freed from his loneliness. The words addressed by God to him seem reproachful, but Job feels better off with a thousand reproaches than with nothing.

What Job needed was not a revelation, since God gave him intelligence to investigate these human questions. What he lacked was to see God, and this is the great yearning of the entire Scriptures: "Show us your face and we will be saved" (Ps 80:8).

• Verses 3a and 4 which read, "You asked: Who obscures divine plans with ignorance? You

Ezk
14:20

Dt 8:16;
Jas 5:11

¹²Yahweh blessed Job's latter days much more than his earlier ones. He came to own fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-donkeys. ¹³He was also blessed with seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴The first daughter he named Dove, the second Cinnamon, and the third Bottle of Perfume. ¹⁵Nowhere in the land

was there found any woman who could compare in beauty with Job's daughters. Their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

¹⁶Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷He died old and full of years. Gen 25:8