



Anonymous

*The Book of Ayub, known
in the west as Job*

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PREFACE

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It is very difficult to write any sort of preface or introduction to the book of Ayub. It is written in the tersest and most condensed style, without a superfluous word, and makes tremendous demands upon any one who attempts to give an English version of it. That all its difficulties are solved in the rendering now offered, the translator does not pretend to claim; he can only say that he has made great endeavours to follow the thought of the writer through his often enigmatical language, and if he has not always been successful in this, he has at least arrived at a very much better understanding of the book and its writer while making the endeavour. Many passages which are simply unintelligible in our previous English versions yield a plain and intelligible sense enough when every word is given its true root meaning, and due regard is given to the continuity of the thought and the general plan of the book.

The castrophe, however, is not a little remarkable, and has been greatly obscured by the fact that a large part of what appears in our English versions, as referring to Leviathan, is really a description of man; though the subject does not appear to have recognised his own portrait, as seen from without, and sketched for him by a master hand. From chap. xli. 17, to the end of the chapter, Man is the subject of the speaker. The Septuagint translator so understood the passage, and though the language is highly enigmatical, still the plain rendering is MAN SHALL CLEAVE

TO HIS BROTHER, and unless man be in some sense the subject the catastrophe becomes unintelligible.

Ayub had been complaining that he could not get a hearing; but when at last the Almighty intervenes, He does so to plead His own cause, and demands that Ayub shall answer Him. " Wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be righteous? " Chap. xl. 8 A.V. And He concludes His speech in fact by complaining that Ayub is too proud to speak to Him. And so Ayub understood what he heard, as his reply makes clear. It was not the Almighty who was the source of his troubles and trials, and even the jealousy and enmity of Satan would have had little or no power if he had not found men willing instruments in his hand; first to destroy and carry off his property, and afterwards to ply him with counsels of despair. Man in fact has not yet learned his power, and constantly allows himself to become a tool in the hands of his mortal foe to his own injury, and that of his brother man. " When he arises the gods will give way; they will be broken and miss the road."

R. SADLER.

Hail, smiling Morn, that tip'st the hills with gold.

Whose rosy fingers ope the gates of day;
Who, the gay face of Nature dost unfold,

At whose bright presence darkness flies away!

THE BOOK OF AYUB

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1. THERE WAS A MAN IN THE LAND OF UZ, Ayub^[1] by name. And this man was whole-hearted^[2] and straightforward, one that feared the gods and turned aside from evil.

2. And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters; and he had acquired seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen^[3], and five hundred she-asses, and his servants were multiplied greatly; and this man was renowned among all the sons of the East.

3. And. his sons went and kept open house^[4] each his day, and sent and called their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of feasting had gone about, Ayub used to send and cleanse them. And he rose early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings^[5] commemorating them all; for Ayub said, Perchance my sons have done amiss^[6] and been guilty of presumption^[7]. Thus did Ayub regularly.

5. And the day arrived for the sons of the gods to go in and present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan also went in in their midst.

6. And Jehovah said to Satan, Where have you come from? And Satan replied to Jehovah and said, From a tour on the earth, and from walking about on it.

7. And Jehovah said, Didst set thy heart on my servant Ayub? For there is none like him on the earth, whole-hearted and straightforward, god-fearing and turning aside from evil.

8. And Satan replied to Jehovah and said, Doth Ayub fear the gods^[8] for naught? Hast not Thou made a fence about him, and about his house, and about all that belongs to him on every side? The works of his hands thou hast blessed, and his cattle are spread abroad upon the earth, but stretch forth now thy hand and touch all that he hath. Will he bless thee to thy face?^[9]

9. And Jehovah said to Satan, Lo all that is his is in thine hand, only upon him stretch not forth thy hand. And Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah.

10. And the day came when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother; and a messenger came in to Ayub and said: The oxen were ploughing and the she-asses were grazing beside them, and Sabaean fell upon them and seized them, and the servants they slew with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped, I alone, to shew it thee.

11. While he was yet speaking another came in and said: The fire of God fell from heaven and set on fire the sheep and the servants and devoured them; and I only escaped, I alone, to shew thee.

12. While he was yet speaking another came in and said: Chaldaean formed three bands and swept down upon the camels and took them, and the servants they slew with the edge of the sword: and I only escaped, I alone, to shew thee.

13. While he was yet speaking another came in and said: Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother, and lo, a great wind came from the side of the desert and smote on the four

sides of the house, and it fell on the young folk and they are dead; and I only escaped, I alone, to shew it you.

14. And Ayub arose and tore off his clothes and cut his hair close, and fell on the earth and prostrated himself, and said: Naked I issued from my mother's womb and naked I shall return thither! Jehovah gave and Jehovah has taken. Blessed be the Name of Jehovah. Through all this Ayub was not found wanting, nor did he ascribe unsavouriness to the gods.

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AND THE DAY ARRIVED when the sons of the gods went in to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan also entered among them to present himself before Jehovah.

2. And Jehovah said to Satan: Where have you come from? And Satan replied to Jehovah and said: From a tour on the earth, and from walking about on it. And Jehovah said to Satan, Didst set thy heart on my servant Ayub? For there is none like him on the earth; a man whole-hearted and straightforward, god-fearing and turning aside from evil. And still he holds fast his whole-heartedness, and you incited me against him to eat him up^[10] without cause.

3. And Satan replied to Jehovah and said, Flesh does after its kind^[11], and all a man has he will give to save his life. But put forth, my Lord^[12], thine hand and touch his bone and his flesh. Will he bless thee to thy face?

4- And Jehovah said to Satan, Lo, he is in thy hand. Only respect^[13] his life. And Satan went forth from the presence

of Jehovah and smote Ayub with bad ulcers from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head; and he took him a potsherd to scrape himself, and he sat down among the ashes.

5. And his wife said to him, Dost thou still hold fast thine whole-heartedness? Submit to God^[14] and die. And he said to her, As it were a word of disgrace hast thou uttered. Nay, shall we accept prosperity from God and not accept adversity? In all this Ayub sinned not^[15] with his lips^[16].

6. And Ayub's three friends heard all the misfortunes that had befallen him, and they came each from his home; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, and they arranged together to go and bewail him and to condole with him. And they lifted up their eyes from afar and were not estranged from him^[17]; and they lifted up their voice and wept, and rent each his clothes, and sprinkled dust on their heads towards heaven^[18]. And they sat down beside him on the earth seven days and seven nights; and none spoke a word to him, for they saw that his pain was passing great.



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AT LAST AYUB OPENED HIS MOUTH^[19] and poured contempt upon^[20] his day. And Ayub answered and said: Perish the day wherein I was born, and the night which said, A male is conceived! Let that day be darkness; let not a god^[21] from above frequent it, and let not light illumine it. Let darkness and the shadow of death claim it; let cloud rest upon it, and let as it were the gall of days distract it.^[22]

2. Let gloom seize upon that night; let it not rejoice among the days of the year, let it not be counted in the months of the calendar^[23]. Let that night be confusion, let no exultation come near it. Let those who curse the day single it out, who are eager to strip Leviathan^[24].

3. Let the star of its dawn be dark; let it turn to the light and find none, and let it not see for the blackness of its eyelids. Inasmuch as it shut not the doors of my womb, nor hid anguish from my eyes.

4. Why did I not die from the womb, and perish from my entrance into the world? Why were there knees ready to receive me, and why breasts that I should suck? ^[25]

5. For now I had been lying down and undisturbed, I had slept thenceforward and been at rest. Along with kings and counsellors of the earth, who make desolations for themselves; or with those who amass themselves gold and fill their houses with silver. Or as a failure concealed I had not been, as children that see not the light.

6. There the wicked cease to tremble^[26], and there the mighty toilers rest. Captives are quiet together, they hear not the voice of the task-master. Small and great are there, and the slave is free from his lord.

7. Why does He give light to the wretched, and life to the bitter of soul? Who long for death and find it not, and dig for it among hidden things; who rejoice and dance in ecstasy, who are exultant when they find a grave.

and reference to them was avoided. But indeed it is well known that the dropping of three days in order to adjust the calendar, caused tremendous and most inexplicable commotion in quite modern times.

Anguish; properly of travail throes.

8

8. To a man whose path is hidden from him, and God has woven a shroud about him? For groans assail me at the sight of food, and my roars are poured out like waters.

9. For my dread and my destiny terrified me, and what I feared is come upon me. I was not secure, I was not inactive, neither did I rest; and distraction came upon me.

A

IV. ^ ND ELIPHAZ THE TEMANITE REPLIED and said: If we attempt a word to you, you

labour to shut our mouth with your talk. What can we do?

2. Lo, you have corrected multitudes, and strengthened hands relaxed; your words braced the tottering, you strengthened the bending knees. But now it is come upon you and you are distressed, your turn is come and you tremble.

3. Is not your reverence a confidence and strength to you, and your whole-heartedness a road for you? Reflect, I pray you, when did innocence ever perish, or when were the righteous disowned?

4. So far as I have seen, those who plough vanity and sow vexation shall reap it; from the breath of God they will perish, and by the wind of His anger they will be consumed.

8. A shroud; not expressed except by implication. Ayub does not say what has been woven about him, he does not profess to know; but a transitive verb requires an object in English, and this word seems to give the sense pretty accurately.

9. Or perhaps, Yet distraction came upon me. See chap. i. 4. This seems to be the key to the whole book. Ayub had a presentiment of what was going to happen, and took every precaution he could devise to avert the wrath of the Unseen.

3. Reverence; strictly fear, i.e., of God according to the usual interpretation, which seems quite correct. Eliphaz seems shocked at the vehemence of his friend's words and inclined to blame him in consequence, rather than to realise the severity of the sufferings which have evoked them.

5. The roaring of a lion, and the voice of the fierce, and the teeth of the shaggy are broken; the strong one perishes for lack of prey, and the sons of the lion are scattered.

6. Moreover a word stole upon me, and my ear caught a whisper of it; in distractions from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls upon mortals.

7. Dread cried out to me and trembling, and shook every bone of my body; a Wind passed over my face, and the hair of my flesh bristled with horror.

8. It stood, and I did not turn from the sight of it. A form impalpable to my eyes. Silence, yet I heard a voice: SHALL MORTAL BE JUST BEFORE GOD? SHALL MAN SHINE MORE THAN HIS MAKER? Lo, He will not trust His servants, and imposes praise on His angels; much more those who dwell