

ACT THREE
THE THIRD AND FINAL ROUND

JOB 21-27

Act Three

Introduction to Act Three

There are difficulties in this section. In the Hebrew text as it stands, words are placed on Job's lips that sound as though they should come from one of his companions. This is made all the more likely by the fact that the structure is defective in that there are no words given to Zophar. Some suggest that the author himself was revising his work, but left it incomplete, and that a disciple is responsible for the ordering of the material. Others are of the opinion that a later editor reorganised the material, and did so badly. I am following the order suggested by Alonso Schökel and Sicre Diaz. The first change occurs after 24:17. Details of the changes will be noted there.

In Act Two the three friends have been offering variations on a common theme: the fate of the wicked. They have been attacking Job from three sides. They have been looking on Job as someone who is oblivious to the folly of his position, to no effect.

Job opens Acts Three with a vigorous reaction. Earlier he has analysed the motivation of his three companions. Here he takes up their point about the fate of the wicked. His words are loaded with sarcasm. Like the others he relies on experience. He concedes that they are attempting to console him, but he assures them that they are failing to do so.

1. Job (21:1-34)

Job's companions have set out to comfort him, but they are not listening to him, so secure are they in their theology! The result is that they are challenging him but in a way that cannot help, for he knows they lack understanding. Their words add to his pain. He speaks out to anyone who might care to listen. Not for the first time, Job challenges false consolation (see 16:2), and asks that people listen rather than talk (see 13:5,13).

We recall the description of the suffering servant: 'There were many who were astonished at him — so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance' (Isaiah 52:14).

This is the scandal that horrifies Job. If God is really controlling things, how can such obvious injustice occur? It makes nonsense of the position presented so confidently by his companions. Job is not alone in puzzling over the prosperity of the godless:

You will be in the right, YHWH, when I lay charges against you; but let me put my case to you. Why does the way of the guilty prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive? You plant them, and they take root; they grow and bring forth fruit; you are near in their mouths yet far from their hearts.

– Jeremiah 12:1-2

As for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

– Psalm 73:2-3

Now we count the arrogant happy; evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test they escape.

– Malachi 3:15

¹Then Job answered:

**²Listen carefully to my words,
at least give me this consolation.**

**³Bear with me while I speak;
then after I have spoken, continue
your mockery.**

**⁴As for me, is my complaint
addressed to mortals?
I have better reason than that to be
impatient?**

**⁵Look at me, and be appalled,
and lay your hand upon your
mouth.**

**⁶When I think of it I am dismayed,
and shuddering seizes my flesh.**

**⁷How is it that godless people
live on,
becoming increasingly wealthy
as they grow old?**

How the godless prosper

⁸**Their children live securely with them,
and they see their offspring increasing,
⁹and their houses safe and peaceful,
God's scourge passes them by.**

¹⁰**Their bull breeds without fail;
their cow calves and never miscarries.**

¹¹**They let their little ones run around
like young goats,
and their girls dance around.**

¹²**They sing to the sound of the
tambourine and the lyre,
and relax to the sound of the pipe.**

¹³**They live out their days in prosperity,
and in peace go down to the grave.**

¹⁴**It is they who say to God,
'Leave us alone!
Your ways are of no interest to us.**

¹⁵**What is the Almighty, that we should
serve him?
And what profit do we get if we pray
to him?'**

¹⁶**Is not their prosperity indeed their own
achievement?
The projects of the wicked are a long
way from God!**

¹⁷**How often is the lamp of the wicked
put out?
How often does calamity come upon
them?
How often do they share in God anger?**

¹⁸**How often are they like chaff before
the wind,
like dust carried off by the storm?**

As we read verses 8-15 we keep in mind the tragedy that has befallen Job. He is flatly contradicting Bildad's view of the fate of the wicked (see 18:5-21).

Job's children led a happy life but were struck down in their prime.

These prosperous people are the ones who have no interest in God. Their words (verse 14) echo those of Isaiah:

Leave the way, turn aside from
the path, let us hear no more
about the Holy One of Israel.

– Isaiah 30:11

The prophet Malachi complains:

You have said: It is vain to serve
God. What do we profit by keep-
ing his command or by going
about as mourners before YHWH
of hosts?

– Malachi 3:14

Verse sixteen begins with an objection that a listener may make. Isaiah speaks out against those who think they can

hide a plan too deep for YHWH,
those whose deeds are in the
dark, and who say, "Who sees
us? Who knows us?"

– Isaiah 29:15

Job is not claiming that the wicked always prosper. But they prosper often enough to challenge the traditional generalisation espoused by Bildad (see 18:5-6).

The Hebrew Scriptures present different ideas on the proposition that children are punished by God for the sins of their parents. The idea is supported by Exodus 34:7 and Deuteronomy 5:9. The obvious point they are making is that children do suffer because of what their parents have done. The mistake, corrected by Jeremiah 31:29 and Ezekiel 18, is to see the suffering of the children as a punishment by God.

As in verse sixteen, verse 22 seems to represent an objection that is immediately countered by Job. Job is not telling God how to act justly. Rather, he is pointing out the unsatisfactory nature of the suppositions underlying the 'comfort' offered by his friends.

Job goes on in verses 23-26 to point out that in death the same fate comes to the godless and the good.

Psalm 73 takes up Psalm 1, only to challenge it. Innocent people suffer and the wicked prosper. However, real prosperity is found only in communion with God, and this is not experienced by the wicked. See especially Psalm 73:2-12

On verse 26, compare:

YHWH will free us for ever from those
who do evil, who crawl like maggots
among the human race.

– Psalm 12:7-8

In verse 27 Job speaks of the psychological persecution his friends are inflicting upon him, so certain are they that it is his sin that is the cause of his condition.

We think of the statement just made by Zophar (see 20:7). They blindly believe that the wicked meet their just deserts, and ask Job for evidence to support his claim that they prosper. Clearly they are blinded by their own theological assumptions.

¹⁹**You say, 'God stores up their
iniquity for their children.'
Nay, let it be paid back to them,
so that they may experience it.**

²⁰**Let their own eyes see their
destruction,
and let them drink of the wrath
of the Almighty.**

²¹**For what do they care for their
household after them,
when the number of their months
is cut off?**

²²**Is it possible to instruct God?
God governs the heavens!**

²³**One dies in full prosperity,
being wholly at ease and secure,
²⁴his loins full of vigour
and the marrow of his bones
strong.**

²⁵**Another dies in bitterness of soul,
never having tasted of good.**

²⁶**Both the one and the other lie
down together in the dust,
swarming with worms.**

²⁷**Oh, I know your thoughts,
and your schemes to wrong me.**

²⁸**I know that you say, 'Where is the
house of the powerful?
Where is the tent in which the
wicked lived?'**

Why won't his friends look at the facts?

**²⁹Why don't you ask those who travel
the roads?**

Why don't you accept their testimony

**³⁰that the wicked are spared in the day
of calamity,**

and are absent when tragedy strikes?

**³¹No one makes them face up to their
conduct,**

**or makes them pay for what they have
done.**

**³²When they are carried to the grave,
a watch is kept over their tomb.**

**³³The clods of the valley lie gently
on them.**

**Everyone follows after them,
and those who go before are
innumerable.**

**³⁴And you, you want to comfort me
with inanities?**

You replies are nothing but deception."

Job's impatience with the closed mind of his companions explodes. Why don't they take the trouble to look around and get in touch with reality? They would see that the 'traditional' thinking about divine retribution does not stack up!

The final joy is to have a solemn funeral with the respect of the community. Job sees the godless enjoying this as well.

2. Eliphaz's Third Discourse (chapter 22:1-30)

There are numerous parallels between this speech of Eliphaz and the penitential Psalm 50. Eliphaz takes on the role of the leader of the liturgy, challenging Job in traditional liturgical language to repent, reminding him of God's compassion for the humble. The author wants in this way to make the point that the penitential liturgy is also unsatisfactory, for it, too, presumes a necessary connection between suffering and guilt.

In verses 2-3 Eliphaz is making the point that we cannot bribe God, thinking to act in such a way as to get God to overlook our sins. There is no substitute for a genuine change of heart and behaviour. Sirach states: 'Do not offer God a bribe, for he will not accept it' (35:14).

Verse 4 recalls Eliphaz's earlier statement: 'Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?' (4:6).

From what is happening to Job, Eliphaz concludes (mistakenly) that Job must be guilty of the sins listed in verses 6-9, sins regularly denounced by the prophets.

It is no good thinking that because God dwells in the highest heaven he does not know what is happening on earth (compare Sirach 16:20ff; 23:18; Psalm 94:7),

- ¹Then Eliphaz from Teman answered:**
²**"Can a human being be of use to God?
 Can even the wisest be of service
 to him?**
³**Is it any pleasure to the Almighty
 if you are righteous,
 or is it gain to him if you make your
 ways blameless?**
⁴**Is it for your piety that he reproves
 you,
 and enters into judgment with you?**
⁵**Is it not rather because of your great
 wickedness
 and your countless iniquities?**
⁶**For you have exacted pledges from
 your family for no reason,
 and stripped the naked of their
 clothing.**
⁷**You have given no water to the weary
 to drink,
 and you have withheld bread from the
 hungry.**
⁸**As a powerful man, lord of the district,
 its privileged citizen,**
⁹**you have sent widows away
 empty-handed,
 and taken away the support of the
 orphans.**
¹⁰**It is for this that snares entrap you,
 and sudden terror overwhelms you;**
¹¹**this is why darkness prevents you
 from seeing,
 and swirling waters overwhelm you.**
¹²**Is not God high in the heavens?
 See the stars, how high they are!**
¹³**You say, 'What does God know?
 Can he distinguish clearly through
 the deep darkness?**
¹⁴**Thick clouds enwrap him, so that he
 does not see,
 as he walks on the dome of heaven.'**

God will bless Job if he repents

- ¹⁵Will you keep to the dark way
that the wicked have trod?
¹⁶They were snatched away
before their time;
the ground under their feet washed
away by a flood.
¹⁷They said to God, 'Leave us alone;
what can the Almighty do to us?'
¹⁸Despite the fact that He filled their
houses with good things,
the wicked carry out their plans
with no reference to Him.
¹⁹The righteous see God and are glad;
the innocent laugh them to scorn:
²⁰Surely our adversaries are cut off,
fire has consumed their possessions.'
²¹Be reconciled, make peace with God;
in this way good will be restored to you.
²²Receive instruction from his mouth,
and bind his words to your heart.
²³If you return to the Almighty,
you will be restored,
if you remove unrighteousness
from your tent,
²⁴if you throw your gold into the dust,
and precious metals of Ophir into the
gravel of the torrent-bed.
²⁵Then the Almighty will be your gold
and your silver, in abundance;
²⁶He will be your delight,
and you will lift up your face to Him.
²⁷When you pray to him, he will hear you,
and you will carry out your vows
when they are due.
²⁸You will decide on a matter, and it will be
settled for you,
and light will shine on your ways,
²⁹For He brings down the proud,
and saves those who humble themselves.
³⁰He will deliver the innocent
and you will be freed because of the
cleanness of your hands."

In his final exhortation (verses 21-30), Eliphaz is appealing to Job to draw near to God and so enjoy God's blessings. We recall:

'Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire other than you ...
For me it is good to be near God.

– Psalm 73:25, 28

The assumption is that Job's wealth has been unjustly acquired. Compare Jeremiah:

Like the partridge hatching what it did not lay, so are all who amass wealth unjustly; in mid-life it will leave them, and at their end they will prove to be fools.

– Jeremiah 17:11

We are reminded of Jesus' words:

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

– Matthew 6:24

The Psalmist declares: 'God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever'(Psalm 73:26); 'Take delight in YHWH and he will grant you the desires of your heart'(Psalm 37:4). Isaiah writes:

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

– Isaiah 55:2).

3. Job (chapters 23:1 – 24:17; 24:25)

Eliphaz has just said to Job that he can get God's forgiveness provided he acknowledges his sin. Job cannot accept this for it would mean acknowledging an untruth, namely, that his suffering is punishment for sin. We who have witnessed the Prologue know that the suffering is a trial not a punishment.

Job asks only for the opportunity to meet with God in God's tribunal, where he knows his innocence must be established, since God is just. He repeats his appeal to put his case before God.

We recall the words of the psalmist:

YHWH, hear a just cause; attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit. From you let my vindication come; let your eyes see the right. If you try my heart, if you visit me by night, if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress ... YHWH, rise up, confront them, overthrow them ...
As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

– Psalm 17:1-3, 13, 15

Job is not pleading for mercy. He is looking for justice, confident that God would hear him and acquit him of sin.

Though we cannot find God, God is certainly there:

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

– Psalm 139:8-10

¹Then Job answered:

²Still today I lament and rebel.

His hand is heavy upon me despite my groaning.

**³Oh, that I knew where I might find him,
waylay him in his courtroom!**

**⁴I would plead my case before him,
my mouth overflowing with arguments.**

**⁵I would learn what he would answer me,
and understand what he would say to me.**

**⁶Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
No; he would give heed to me.**

**⁷There an upright person could reason with him,
and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.**

**⁸But when I go towards the east,
he is not there;
or to the west, I fail to make contact;**

**⁹to the north where he is active,
and I cannot make him out;
to the south, he conceals himself
and I cannot see him.**

The thought of God fills Job with awe

- ¹⁰And he, all the while, keeps watch
over everything I do.
When he has tested me, I shall come
out like gold.
- ¹¹He knows how close I have kept
to the path he traced for me;
I have kept his way and have not
turned aside.
- ¹²I have not departed from the
commandment of his lips;
I have treasured in my bosom
the words of his mouth.
- ¹³But he does not change, and who can
dissuade him?
What he desires, that he does.
- ¹⁴He will bring the sentence he has
passed to completion,
plus whatever else he has in mind.
- ¹⁵Any wonder I am terrified in his
presence;
the very thought of him fills me with
dread.
- ¹⁶God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty has terrified me;
- ¹⁷If only I could vanish in darkness,
if only thick darkness would hide me
from view!
- ^{24:1}Why does the Almighty not indicate
when he is about to act,
in such a way that his friends could
witness his intervention?
- ²The wicked remove landmarks;
they seize flocks and pasture them.
- ³They drive away the donkey of the
orphan;
they take the widow's ox for a pledge.
- ⁴They thrust out of the way the needy,
the poor of the earth are forced to hide.
- ⁵Like wild asses in the desert they go out
to their toil,
scavenging from early morn, seeking in
the wasteland food for their young.

Job sees his condition as a refining
trial. Verse 10 echoes the psalmist:

If you try my heart, if you visit
me by night, if you test me, you
will find no wickedness in me.

– Psalm 17:3

Verse 11 also:

My steps have held fast to your
paths; my feet have not slipped.

– Psalm 17:5

Job knows he cannot change God.

On verse 13 see Isaiah:

YHWH of hosts has sworn: As
I have designed, so shall it be;
and as I have planned, so shall
it come to pass: This is the plan
that is planned concerning the
whole earth; and this is the hand
that is stretched out over all the
nations. For YHWH of hosts has
planned, and who will annul it?
His hand is stretched out, and
who will turn it back?

– Isaiah 14:24, 26, 27

If God is interested in human af-
fairs, there is no way of knowing
his timing.

In chapter 24 Job goes on to describe
the human injustice that goes on
without God seeming to do anything
about it.

In verse 5 Job begins to describe the
lot of the disenfranchised poor.

Verses 6-8 continue the description of the lot of the poor.

**⁶They reap in a field not their own
and they glean in the vineyard of the wealthy.
⁷They lie all night naked, without clothing,
and have no covering in the cold.
⁸They are wet with the rain of the mountains,
and cling to the rock for want of shelter.**

Verse 9 is a further description of the awful injustice that goes on.

**⁹There are those who snatch the orphan child
from the breast,
and take as a pledge the infant of the poor.**

In verses 10-12 Job, once again, speaks of the condition of those who suffer injustice.

**¹⁰They go about naked, for lack of clothing;
weighed down with sheaves, they suffer
hunger;
¹¹between their millstones they press out oil;
they tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst.
¹²In the city the dying groan,
the wounded cry for help;
yet God pays no attention to their prayer.**

Verse 12 goes to the heart of what is troubling Job: ‘God pays no attention to their prayer’.

**¹³How they rebel against the light,
those who know not God’s ways,
are unacquainted with its paths:**

Verses 13-16 continue to describe the behaviour of the wicked – behaviour that goes on unchecked.

**¹⁴the murderer rises at dusk
to kill the poor and needy,
at night the thief does his rounds;
¹⁵the adulterer, too, waits for twilight,
saying, ‘No eye will see me’,
he disguises his face;
¹⁶They enter the house under cover of darkness
by day they shut themselves up;
they have nothing to do that befits the light.
¹⁷For them the dawn brings darkness;
they are at home in the terrors of the dark.**

Following Luis Alonso Schökel, we have apportioned 24:18-24 not to Job, but to Zophar (see after 27:1-7). Compare Marvin Pope’s Introduction page xx.

Job concludes.

**²⁵If it is not so, who will prove me a liar,
and show that there is nothing in what I say?”**

4. Bildad's Third Discourse (chapter 25:1-6; 26:5-14)

¹Then Bildad the Shuhite spoke up:

**²God has a terrifying power,
and he imposes peace in his high
heaven.**

**³his legions are beyond number
and is there ever a time when the
light does not shine?**

**⁴Can a mortal man, therefore,
advance arguments before God?
Can one born of woman ever be
pure?**

**⁵If not even the moon is bright
and the stars are not pure in his
sight,**

**⁶how much less a mortal man,
that maggot,
a human being, that worm!**

In verses 2-3 there appears to be an allusion to the myth of the conquering of lesser gods by the High God.

In a repetition of Eliphaz's argument in 4:17 and 15:14-16, Bildad insists that no human being is innocent. Job has already agreed to this (see 9:2; 14:4). Job is not claiming to be innocent, but he is claiming that the punishment he is receiving is not a just one.

Bildad adds a warning, reminding Job of how God deals with those who rebel against him.

We might compare Sirach:

Human beings are not like God, for they are not immortal. What is brighter than the sun? Yet it can be eclipsed. God passes in review the host heaven; how much more human beings who are dust and ashes.

– Sirach 17:30-32

In the Massoretic Hebrew text 26:5-14 are spoken by Job. Both Alonso Schökel and Pope suggest that they have been misplaced and should be attributed to Bildad.

The 'Shades' are the lifeless inhabitants of the underworld. The earth rested on pillars, with waters underneath.

The cosmology of verses 7-12 is that of Genesis 1.

'Zaphon'(verse 7) was the Syrian equivalent of the Greek Mount Olympus. Verse 7 is a poetic allusion to the mythical sacred mountain where the gods assembled.

We turn again to Sirach:

We could say more but could never say enough; let the final word be: "He is the all." We praise his impenetrable greatness, for he is greater than all his works.

– Sirach 43:27-28

On 'Rahab'(verses 12-13) see 9:13. In the Mesopotamian Creation Epic, Marduk subdued the sea monster with a mighty wind. Compare:

You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

– Psalm 74:13-14

**⁵The Shades below tremble,
under the waters and their inhabitants.**

**⁶Sheol is naked before God,
and Death's kingdom is uncovered.**

**⁷He stretches Zaphon over the void,
and suspends the earth over emptiness.**

**⁸He binds up the waters in his thick
clouds,
and the clouds do not burst open under
the weight.**

**⁹He covers the face of the full moon,
and spreads over it his cloud.**

**¹⁰He has described a circle on the face
of the waters,
at the boundary between light and
darkness.**

**¹¹The pillars of heaven tremble,
and are astounded at his rebuke.**

**¹²By his power he stilled the Sea;
by his skill he struck down Rahab.**

**¹³At his breath the heavens became
resplendent;
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.**

**¹⁴These are indeed but the outer edges
of his ways;
and how small a whisper do we hear
of him!**

**But the thunder of his power who can
understand?"**

5. Job (26:1-4; 27:1-7)

Job's reply is brief and intensely sarcastic. He seems to have given up trying to convince Bildad and the others. They see God as the cause of Job's condition. They are secure in believing that God is just, and so their theology demands that Job is guilty and is being justly punished by God. There is no chance that the facts of the case will dint their theological certainty. Job repeats his protestation of innocence.

^{26:1}**Then Job answered:**

Verses 2-4, addressed by Job to his 'friends', are heavy with sarcasm.

²⁷**A great help you have been to one
who is powerless!**

**What great assistance you have given
to an arm that has no strength!**

³**How you have counseled one who has
no wisdom,
teaching him with such skill!**

⁴**To whom have you directed your
words?
What spirit is speaking in you?**

¹**Job again took up his discourse and said:**

²**As God lives, who has taken away
my right,
and the Almighty, who has
overwhelmed me with bitterness,**

³**as long as I can breathe
and the breath of God is in my
nostrils,**

⁴**my lips will never utter what is
false,
never will my tongue pronounce
what is untrue!**

⁵**Far be it from me to say that you
are right;
until my last breath I will defend
my integrity.**

⁶**I will cling to my innocence
without giving way;
my heart does not reproach
me for any of my days!**

⁷**It will be my enemy who is
pronounced guilty,
my opponent shown to be unjust.**

Job declares his determined opposition to the position espoused by his 'friends'. He supports his claim to 'innocence' with an oath to 'El the high god, Shaddai, the god of the mountain (verse 2).

6. Zophar's Third Discourse (24:18-24 and 27:8-23)

Alonso Schökel suggests that both these sections should be attributed to Zophar. Marvin Pope has come to the same conclusion. The Massoretic Hebrew text lacks a concluding speech from Zophar, and both these sections contain ideas that do not fit with Job's way of thinking, but rather with that of his companions. They add little to what has already been said, and focus on the disgrace of the person whose actions are evil.

Zophar is speaking of a person who pays no heed to God's commands. The Book of Wisdom compares the wicked to a

ship that sails through the bil-
lowy water, and when it has
passed no trace can be found, no
track of its keel in the waves.

– Wisdom 5:10

Zophar continues to present the traditional 'wisdom' that the godless always suffer eventually, and the suffering is always deserved. It is God's punishment for sin.

One thinks of the curse suffered by the land because of Adam's sin (see Genesis 3:17), and the sin of Cain (Genesis 4:12). Compare:

Some of them have left behind
a name, so that others declare
their praise. But of others there
is no memory; they have per-
ished as though they had never
existed; they have become as
though they had never been
born.

– Sirach 44:8-9

Compare:

Yet a little while, and the
wicked will be no more; though
you look diligently for their
place, they will not be there.

– Psalm 37:10

¹⁸He skims over the surface of the waters;

**cursed in the countryside is his farm.
No longer does he tread the paths
of his vineyard.**

**¹⁹Drought and heat snatch away water
from the snow fields;
in the same way Sheol dries up
the sinner.**

**²⁰The womb forgets him; worms find
in him their delight;
he is no longer remembered;
and wickedness is broken like a tree.**

**²¹For he has maltreated the childless
woman,
and been of no help to the widow.**

**²²However much he increases his strength
and keeps his power
he cannot secure his life.**

**²³God leaves him feeling confident and
secure
but his eyes keep close watch on
his ways.**

**²⁴Exalted for a little while, he is no more;
he is knocked down and withers
like a plant;
he is cut off like heads of grain.**

6. Zophar's Third Discourse continued (27:8-23)

⁸For what hope is there for the godless when
God cuts him off,
when God takes away his life?

Zophar continues to expand his discourse on the fate of the godless.

⁹Will God hear his cry when trouble comes
upon him?

¹⁰Will he take delight in the Almighty?
Will he call upon God at all times?

¹¹I will teach you about God's power;
the purpose of the Almighty I will not
conceal from you.

¹²All of you have seen it yourselves;
why then have you become altogether vain?

¹³This is the lot preserved by God for the
wicked,
and the heritage that oppressors receive
from the Almighty:

¹⁴If he has many children, it is for the sword;
and his offspring will not have enough
to eat.

¹⁵Pestilence will bury any who survive,
and their widows will not lament their
passing.

¹⁶Though he heaps up silver like dust,
and piles up clothing like clay –

¹⁷he may pile it up, but the just will wear it,
and the innocent will divide the silver.

¹⁸The house he builds will be for the
white ants,
like a booth made by one who watches
over a vineyard.

¹⁹If he goes to bed rich, it will be for the last
time;
when he opens his eyes, it is gone.

²⁰By day terrors overtake him like a flood;
in the night a whirlwind carries him off.

²¹The east wind sweeps him up and he is gone;
it sweeps him from his place.

²²It hurls itself at him without pity;
he cannot escape its power in whatever
direction he flees.

²³They clap their hands with joy and whistle,
when he is gone from his place.