Job Resources

# 1. Ludlul Bel Nimeqi

*1. I advanced in life, I attained to the allotted span
Wherever I turned there was evil, evil---
Oppression is increased, uprightness I see not.
I cried unto god, but he showed not his face.*

*5. I prayed to my goddess, but she raised not her head.
The seer by his oracle did not discern the future
Nor did the enchanter with a libation illuminate my case
I consulted the necromancer, but he opened not my understanding.
The conjurer with his charms did not remove my ban.*

*10. How deeds are reversed in the world!
I look behind, oppression encloses me
Like one who the sacrifice to god did not bring
And at meal-time did not invoke the goddess
Did not bow down his face, his offering was not seen;*

*15. (Like one) in whose mouth prayers and supplications were locked
(For whom) god's day had ceased, a feast day become rare,
(One who) has thrown down his fire-pan, gone away from their images
God's fear and veneration has not taught his people
Who invoked not his god when he ate god's food;*

*20. (Who) abandoned his goddess, and brought not what is prescribed
(Who) oppresses the weak, forgets his god
Who takes in vain the mighty name of his god, he says, I am like him.
But I myself thought of prayers and supplications---
Prayer was my wisdom, sacrifice, my dignity;*

*25. The day of honoring the gods was the joy of my heart
The day of following the goddess was my acquisition of wealth
The prayer of the king, that was my delight,
And his music, for my pleasure was its sound.
I gave directions to my land to revere the names of god,*

*30. To honor the name of the goddess I taught my people.
Reverence for the king I greatly exalted
And respect for the palace I taught the people---
For I knew that with god these things are in favor.
What is innocent of itself, to god is evil!*

*35. What in one's heart is contemptible, to one's god is good!
Who can understand the thoughts of the gods in heaven?
The counsel of god is full of destruction; who can understand?
Where may human beings learn the ways of God?
He who lives at evening is dead in the morning;*

*40. Quickly he is troubled; all at once he is oppressed;
At one moment he sings and plays;
In the twinkling of an eye he howls like a funeral-mourner.
Like sunshine and clouds their thoughts change;
They are hungry and like a corpse;*

*45. They are filled and rival their god!
In prosperity they speak of climbing to Heaven
Trouble overtakes them and they speak of going down to Sheol.*

*[At this point the tablet is broken. The narrative is resumed on the reverse of the tablet.]*

*46 Into my prison my house is turned.
Into the bonds of my flesh are my hands thrown;
Into the fetters of myself my feet have stumbled.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .*

*47. With a whip he has beaten me; there is no protection;
With a staff he has transfixed me; the stench was terrible!
All day long the pursuer pursues me,
In the night watches he lets me breathe not a moment
Through torture my joints are torn asunder;*

*48. My limbs are destroyed, loathing covers me;
On my couch I welter like an ox
I am covered, like a sheep, with my excrement.
My sickness baffled the conjurers
And the seer left dark my omens.*

*49. The diviner has not improved the condition of my sickness-
The duration of my illness the seer could not state;
The god helped me not, my hand he took not;
The goddess pitied me not, she came not to my side
The coffin yawned; they [the heirs] took my possessions;*

*50. While I was not yet dead, the death wail was ready.
My whole land cried out: "How is he destroyed!"
My enemy heard; his face gladdened
They brought as good news the glad tidings, his heart rejoiced.
But I knew the time of all my family*

*51. When among the protecting spirits their divinity is exalted.
........................................
........................................
Let thy hand grasp the javelin
Tabu-utul-Bel, who lives at Nippur,
52. Has sent me to consult thee
Has laid his............upon me.
In life........has cast, he has found. [He says]:
"[I lay down] and a dream I beheld;
This is the dream which I saw by night:*

*53 . [He who made woman] and created man
Marduk, has ordained (?) that he be encompassed with sickness (?)."
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .*

*54. And...........in whatever.............
He said: "How long will he be in such great affliction and distress?
What is it that he saw in his vision of the night?"
"In the dream Ur-Bau appeared
A mighty hero wearing his crown*

*55. A conjurer, too, clad in strength,
Marduk indeed sent me;
Unto Shubshi-meshri-Nergal he brought abundance;
In his pure hands he brought abundance.
By my guardian-spirit (?) he stopped (?) ,"*

*56. By the seer he sent a message:
"A favorable omen I show to my people."
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
...he quickly finished; the.........was broken
........of my lord, his heart was satisfied;*

*57. .................his spirit was appeased
......my lamentation....................
................good ..........*

*58. ........................................
......................................

................like............ ......
He approached (?) and the spell which he had pronounced (?),*

*59. He sent a storm wind to the horizon;
To the breast of the earth it bore a blast
Into the depth of his ocean the disembodied spirit vanished (?);
Unnumbered spirits he sent back to the under-world.
The...........of the hag-demons he sent straight to the mountain.*

*60. The sea-flood he spread with ice;
The roots of the disease he tore out like a plant.
The horrible slumber that settled on my rest
Like smoke filled the sky..........
With the woe he had brought, unrepulsed and bitter, he filled the earth like a storm.*

*61. The unrelieved headache which had overwhelmed the heavens
He took away and sent down on me the evening dew.
My eyelids, which he had veiled with the veil of night
He blew upon with a rushing wind and made clear their sight.
My ears, which were stopped, were deaf as a deaf man's*

*62. He removed their deafness and restored their hearing.
My nose, whose nostril had been stopped from my mother's womb---
He eased its defonnity so that I could breathe.
My lips, which were closed he had taken their strength---
He removed their trembling and loosed their bond.*

*63. My mouth which was closed so that I could not be understood---
He cleansed it like a dish, he healed its disease.
My eyes, which had been attacked so that they rolled together---
He loosed their bond and their balls were set right.
The tongue, which had stiffened so that it could not be raised*

*64. He relieved its thickness, so its words could be understood.
The gullet which was compressed, stopped as with a plug---
He healed its contraction, it worked like a flute.
My spittle which was stopped so that it was not secreted---
He removed its fetter, he opened its lock.
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From: George A. Barton, Archaeology and The Bible, 3rd Ed., (Philadelphia: American Sunday School, 1920), pp. 392-395.*

# 2. A Dialogue between a Sufferer and a Friend (“The Babylonian Theodicy”)

Sufferer I

1~O sage [.......] come, [let] me tell you.
2~[............ let] me inform you.
3~[.....]......[.....]... you,
4~I [....] the suffering, will not cease to reverence you.
5~Where is the wise man of your calibre?
6~Where is the scholar who can compete with you?
7~Where is the counsellor to whom I can relate my grief?
8~I am finished. Anguish has come upon me.
9~I was a youngest child; fate took my father;
10~My mother who bore me departed to the Land of No Return.
11~My father and mother left me without a guardian.

Friend II

12~Respected friend, what you say is gloomy.
13~You let your mind dwell on evil, my dear fellow.
14~You make your fine discretion like an imbecile’s;
15~You have reduced your beaming face to scowls.
16~Our fathers in fact give up and go the way of death.
17~It is an old saying that they cross the river Ḫubur.
18~When you consider mankind as a whole,
19~... it is not ... that has made the impoverished first-born rich.
20~Whose favourite is the fattened rich man?
21~He who waits on his god has a protecting angel,
22~The humble man who fears his goddess accumulates wealth.

Sufferer III

23~My friend, your mind is a river whose spring never fails,
24~he accumulated mass of the sea, which knows no decrease.
25~I will ask you a question; listen to what I say.
26~Pay attention for a moment; hear my words.
27~My body is a wreck, emaciation darkens [me,]
28~My success has vanished, my stability has gone.
29~My strength is enfeebled, my prosperity has ended,
30~Moaning and grief have blackened my features.
31~he corn of my fields is far from satisfying [me,]
32~My wine, the life of mankind, is too little for satiety.
33~Can a life of bliss be assured? I wish I knew how!

Friend IV

34~What I say is restrained ....[..]
35~But you [...] your balanced reason like a madman.
36~You make [your ....] diffuse and irrational,
37~You [turn] your select .. blind.
38~As to your persistent unending desire for ..[..]
39~[The former] security ..[..] by prayers.
40~The appeased goddess returns by .[..]
41~[....]. who did not uphold takes pity on .[..]
42~Ever seek the [correct standards] of justice.
43~Your .., the mighty one, will show kindness,
44~[..........] will grant mercy.

Sufferer V

45~I bow to you, my comrade, I grasp your wisdom.
46~[.........].. the utterance of [your words.]
47~[.........].. come, let me [say something to you.]
48~The onager, the wild ass, who filled itself with ..[.]
49~Did it pay attention to the giver of assured divine oracles?
50~The savage lion who devoured the choicest flesh,
51~Did it bring its flour offering to appease the goddess’s anger?
52~[..]. the nouveau riche who has multiplied his wealth,
53~Did he weigh out precious gold for the goddess Mami?
54~[Have I] held back offerings? I have prayed to my god,
55~[I have] pronounced the blessing over the goddess’s regular sacrifices, ....[...]

Friend VI

56~O palm, tree of wealth, my precious brother,
57~Endowed with all wisdom, jewel of [gold,]
58~You are as stable as the earth, but the plan of the gods is remote.
59~Look at the superb wild ass on the [plain;]
60~The arrow will follow the gorer who trampled down the fields.
61~Come, consider the lion that you mentioned, the enemy of cattle.
62~For the crime which the lion committed the pit awaits him.
63~The opulent nouveau riche who heaps up goods
64~Will be burnt at the stake by the king before his time.
65~Do you wish to go the way these have gone?
66~Rather seek the lasting reward of (your) god!

Sufferer VII

67~Your mind is a north wind, a pleasant breeze for the peoples.
68~Choice friend, your advice is fine.
69~Just one word would I put before you.
70~Those who neglect the god go the way of prosperity,
71~While those who pray to the goddess are impoverished and dispossessed.
72~In my youth I sought the will of my god;
73~With prostration and prayer I followed my goddess.
74~But I was bearing a profitless corvée as a yoke.
75~My god decreed instead of wealth destitution.
76~A cripple is my superior, a lunatic outstrips me.
77~The rogue has been promoted, but I have been brought low.

Friend VIII

78~My reliable fellow, holder of knowledge, your thoughts are perverse.
79~You have forsaken right and blaspheme against your god’s designs.
80~In your mind you have an urge to disregard the divine ordinances.
81~[.........] the sound rules of your goddess.
82~The plans of the god [........] like the centre of heaven,
83~The decrees of the goddess are not [.............]
84~To understand properly .[................]
85~Their ideas [.............] to mankind;
86~To grasp the way of a goddess [............]
87~Their reason is close at hand [............]
88~..[.........................]

Friend XII

125~[I] ..[..
126~[I] made white ..[...
127~[I] cared for ..[...
128~[I] looked after the young [ones ...
129~[I] made the people prosperous [...
130~[I] gathered ..[...
131~[I] gave heed to the god [...
132~[I] sought that which was necessary [...

Sufferer XIII

133~I will abandon my home .[.............]
134~I will desire no property .[............]
135~I will ignore my god’s regulations and trample on his rites.
136~I will slaughter a calf and .... food,
137~I will take the road and go to distant parts.
138~I will bore a well and let loose a flood,
139~Like a robber I will roam over the vast open country.
140~I will go from house to house and ward off hunger;
141~Famished I will walk around and patrol the streets.
142~Like a beggar I will [....] inwards [...........]
143~Bliss is far away ..[ ...............]

Friend XIV

144~My friend, [your mind] dwells on [........]
145~Human activity, which you do not want [.........]
146~In [your] mind there are [...........]
147~Your reason has left you [...........]

Sufferer XV

159~The daughter speaks [......] to her mother.
160~The fowler who cast [his net] is fallen.
161~Taking everything, which one [......] luck?
162~The many wild creatures which ..[........]
163~Which among them has [....?]
164~Should I seek a son and daughter [......]
165~May I not lose what I find ..[........]

Friend XVI

166~Humble and submissive one ...[......]
167~Your will ever submits [......] precious.
168~[..]. your mind ....[.......]

Sufferer XVII

181~The crown prince is clothed in [....,]
182~The son of the destitute and naked is robed in .[.....]
183~The watchman of malt..[.] gold,
184~While he who counted his shining gold in a bushel measure is carrying ..[...]
185~The vegetarian [devours] a noble’s banquet,
186~While the son of the notable and the rich [subsists] on carob.
187~The owner of wealth is fallen. [His ....]. is far away.

Sufferer XIX

199~.[...............] wisdom.
200~You embrace the totality of wisdom, you counsel the peoples.

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Friend XX

212~You have let your subtle mind go astray.
213~[.........]. you have ousted wisdom,
214~You despise propriety, you profane ordinances.
215~[........] head a mitre, the carrying-hood is far away from him.
216~[.........]. is made a person of influence.
217~[..........] is called a savant;
218~He is looked after and obtains his wishes.
219~Follow in the way of the god, observe his rites,
220~[.........]. is counted as righteousness.

Sufferer XXI

221~[..............].... rogues,
222~[..............]. all are cheats.
223~They amass goods .................

Friend XXII

235~As for the rogue whose favour you seek,
236~His ....... soon vanishes.
237~The godless cheat who has wealth,
238~A death-dealing weapon pursues him.
239~Unless you seek the will of the god, what luck have you?
240~He that bears his god’s yoke never lacks food, though it be sparse.
241~Seek the kindly wind of the god,
242~What you have lost over a year you will make up in a moment.

Sufferer XXIII

243~I have looked around society, but the evidence is contrary.
244~The god does not impede the way of a devil.
245~A father drags a boat along the canal,
246~While his first-born lies in bed.
247~The first-born son pursues his way like a lion,
248~The second son is happy to be a mule driver.
249~The heir stalks along the road like a bully,
250~The younger son will give food to the destitute.
251~How have I profited that I have bowed down to my god?
252~I have to bow beneath the base fellow that meets me;
253~The dregs of humanity, like the rich and opulent, treat me with contempt.

Friend XXIV

254~O wise one, O savant, who masters knowledge,
255~In your anguish you blaspheme the god.
256~The divine mind, like the centre of the heavens, is remote;
257~Knowledge of it is difficult; the masses do not know it.
258~Among all the creatures whom Aruru formed
259~The prime offspring is altogether ...
260~In the case of a cow, the first calf is lowly,
261~The later offspring is twice as big.
262~A first child is born a weakling,
263~But the second is called an heroic warrior.
264~Though a man may observe what the will of the god is, the masses do not know it.

Sufferer XXV

265~Pay attention, my friend, understand my ideas.
266~Heed the choice expression of my words.
267~People extol the word of a strong man who is trained in murder,
268~But bring down the powerless who has done no wrong.
269~They confirm the wicked whose crime is .[...,]
270~Yet suppress the honest man who heeds the will of his god.
271~They fill the [store house] of the oppressor with gold,
272~But empty the larder of the beggar of its provisions.
273~They support the powerful, whose ... is guilt,
274~But destroy the weak and drive away the powerless.
275~And as for me, the penurious, a nouveau riche is persecuting me.

Friend XXVI

276~Narru, king of the gods, who created mankind,
277~And majestic Zulummar, who dug out their clay,
278~And mistress Mami, the queen who fashioned them,
279~Gave perverse speech to the human race.
280~With lies, and not truth, they endowed them for ever.
281~Solemnly they speak in favour of a rich man,
282~"He is a king," they say, "riches go at his side."
283~But they harm a poor man like a thief,
284~They lavish slander upon him and plot his murder,
285~Making him suffer every evil like a criminal, because he has no protection.
286~Terrifyingly they bring him to his end, and extinguish him like a flame.

Sufferer XXVII

287~You are kind, my friend; behold my grief.
288~Help me; look on my distress; know it.
289~I, though humble, wise, and a suppliant,
290~Have not seen help and succour for one moment.
291~I have trodden the square of my city unobtrusively,
292~My voice was not raised, my speech was kept low.
293~I did not raise my head, but looked at the ground,
294~I did not worship even as a slave in the company of my associates.
295~May the god who has thrown me off give help,
296~May the goddess who has [abandoned me] show mercy,
297~For the shepherd Šamaš guides the peoples like a god.

# 3. Using Job in Mourning

Nathaniel Dovano Smith died a few hours after his birth. His memorial service at Pasadena Mennonite Church included songs, readings, and reflections, and a time of congregational sharing in which people expressed their laments on behalf of Nathaniel, his parents, and their wider family. This litany from Job followed. Someone who attended said they would start coming to the church because they did not know another church where these feelings and questions could be voiced.

*Leader*: What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil. (Job 3:25-27)

*Congregation*: *No peace, no quietness, no rest, but only turmoil.*

*Leader***:** If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales!

It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas - no wonder my words have been impetuous. (Job 6:2-3)

*Congregation*: *Outweigh the sand of the seas.*

*Leader***:** Yet if I speak, my pain is not relieved; and if I refrain, it does not go away.

Surely, O God, you have worn me out; you have devastated my entire household. (Job 16:6-7)

*Congregation*: *Devastated my entire household*

*Leader***:** To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his. (Job 12:13)

*Congregation*: *Wisdom and power, counsel and understanding are his.*

*Leader***:** At least there is hope for a tree:

 If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail.

*Congregation*: *It will sprout again*

*Leader***:** Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil,

 yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant.

(Job 14:7-9)

*Congregation*: *Put forth shoots like a plant.*

*Leader***:** Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll,

 that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. (Job 19:23-25)

*Congregation: I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.*

*Prayer: Hidden God, in mystery and silence you are present in our lives, bringing new life out of death, hope out of despair. We thank you that you do not leave us alone but labor to make us whole. Help us to perceive your unseen hand in the unfolding of our lives, and to attend to the gentle guidance of your Spirit, that we may know the joy of your love and rest in your peace. Amen.*

# 4. Job: Play-reading Version

An abbreviated version of the story of Job, based on the script of a version presented in drama, dance, mime, and audio-visuals, in St. John’s College, Nottingham in June 1975. The text below is adapted from the NEB.

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| --- |
| Cast: Two narrators, God, the Adversary, four messengers, Job, Job’s wife, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu |
| **SCENE I** (chs 1–2) |
| Narrator 1 | There lived in the land of Uz a man of blameless and upright life named Job, who feared God and set his face against wrongdoing. He had seven sons and three daughters; and he owned thousands of sheep, camels, and cattle. He was careful to offer sacrifices for his children, in case they had sinned against God. |
| Narrator 2 | The day came when the members of the court of heaven took their places in the presence of Yahweh, and the Adversary was there among them. |
| God(to the Adversary) | Where have you been? |
| Adversary | Walking here and there, roaming round the earth. |
| God | Have you considered my servant Job? You will find no-one like him on earth, a man of blameless and upright life, who fears God and set his face against wrongdoing. |
| Adversary | Hasn’t Job good reason to be God-fearing? Have you not hedged him round on every side with your protection, him and his family and all his possessions? But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and then he will curse you to your face. |
| God | So be it. All that he has is in your hands; only Job himself you must not touch. |
| Narrator 2 | So the Adversary left Yahweh’s presence. |
| Narrator 1 | There came a day when Job’s sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the eldest brother’s house. A messenger came running to Job. |
| Messenger 1 | Job! The oxen were plowing when tribal raiders swooped down and carried them off, putting the herdsmen to the sword. |
| Messenger 2(as 1 finishes) | Job! God’s fire flashed from heaven. It struck the sheep and shepherds and burnt them up. |
| Messenger 3(as 2 finishes) | Job! Tribesmen from the north have made a raid on the camels and carried them off, putting the drivers to the sword. |
| Messenger 4(as 3 finishes) | Job! Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking when a whirlwind from the desert struck the house. All the young people are dead. |
| Narrator 1 | Job tore his clothes in grief and fell prostrate on the ground. |
| Job | I was born with nothing and I will die with nothing. Yahweh gives and Yahweh takes away; blessed be the name of Yahweh. |
| Narrator 2 | Once again the day came when the members of the court of heaven took their places in the presence of Yahweh, and the Adversary was there among them. |
| God | Where have you been? |
| Adversary | Walking here and there, roaming round the earth. |
| God | Have you considered my servant Job? You incited me to ruin him, but his integrity is still unshaken. |
| Adversary | There is nothing a man will grudge as long as he can save his own life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and see if he will not curse you to your face. |
| God | So be it. He is in your hands; but spare his life. |
| Narrator 2 | So the Adversary smote Job with ulcers from head to foot, and he went to sit alone at the ash-heap. |
| Narrator 1 | Then his wife spoke. |
| Job’s wife | Are you still holding onto your integrity? Curse God, and die! |
| Narrator 1 | Throughout all this, Job did not utter one sinful word. |
| **SCENE 2** (chs 3–27) |  |
| Narrator 1 | Job had three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. When they heard of all these calamities which had overtaken him, they decided to come to offer him comfort. When they saw him, they wept. For seven days and nights they sat beside him on the ground, and none of them said a word to him; because they saw how much he was suffering.Eventually Job broke the silence. |
| Job (ch 3) | Curse the day I was bornand the night which said, ‘A man is conceived’!May that day turn to darkness; may God above not look for it,nor light of dawn shine on it.That night, may it be barren forever,no cry of joy be heard in it,because it did not shut the doors of the womb that bore me.Why did I not die when I came out of the womb?Why was I ever put to suck at my mother’s breasts?Why was I not hidden, like an infant that has not lived to see the light?For then I should be lying in the quiet grave, asleep in death, at rest.Why should the sufferer be born to see the light?Why is life given to people who find it so bitter?They wait for death, but it does not come,they seek it more eagerly than hidden treasure.Why should a man be born to wander blindly,hedged in by God on every side?There is no peace of mind or quiet for me;I chafe in torment and have no rest. |
| Eliphaz (chs 4-5)(A pious mystic who gets carried away by the teaching he gives based on his own religious experience) | If one ventures to speak with you, will you be offended?Think how once you encouraged those who faltered. But now adversity comes upon you, you lose patience.Is your religion no comfort to you?For consider, what innocent person has ever perished?Those who plow mischief and sow trouble reap as they have sown.A word stole into my ears in a vision.Someone stood there, and I heard a voice:“Can a mortal be righteous before God?Can human beings be pure before their maker?”If I were you, I would make my petition to God and lay my cause before him.Do not reject the discipline of the Almighty.He wounds, but he binds up. |
| Job (chs 6–7) | O that my troubles might be set on the scales.They would outweigh the sands of the sea.What wonder if my words are wild?The arrows of the Almighty find their mark in me and their poison soaks into my spirit.O that God would be pleased to snatch me away with his hand and cut me off.For that would bring relief,and in the face of unsparing anguish I would leap for joy.What end have I to expect, that I should be patient?How shall I find help within myself? |
| (to friends) | Devotion is due from his friendsto one who despairs and loses faith in the Almighty;but my brothers have been as treacherous as the channels of streams that run dry,that vanish the moment they are in spate,dwindle in the heat and are gone.You felt dismay, and were afraid.Tell me plainly, and I will listen in silence:show me where I have erred. |
| (to self) | Do human beings not have hard service on earth?Months of futility are my portion,troubled nights are my lot.My life is but a breath of wind. |
| (to God) | What are human beings that thou makest much of them—only to punish them morning by morningor to test them every hour of the day?Wilt thou not look away from me for an instant?Why dost thou not pardon my offenseand take away my guilt? |
| Bildad (ch 8)(A preachy non-listener, full of true, biblical, orthodox platitudes) | How long will you say such things,the long-winded ramblings of an old man?Does the Almighty pervert justice?Your sons sinned against him,so he left them to be victims of their own iniquity.If only you will seek God betimes.If you are innocent and upright,then indeed will he watch over you.Inquire now of older generationsand consider the experience of their fathers.Can rushes grow where there is no marsh?They will wither earlier than any green plant.Such is the fate of all who forget God.God will not spurn the blameless.He will yet fill your mouth with laughter. |
| Job (chs 9–10) | I know that no-one can win a case against God.If anyone chooses to argue with him,God will not answer one question in a thousand.It is God who moves mountains,who by himself spread out the heavens,who does great and unsearchable things,marvels without number. |
|  | He passes me by and I do not see himHow can I find words to dispute with him?If the appeal is to force, see how strong he is.Though I am right, he condemns me out of my own mouth.If only there were one to arbitrate between us. |
| (to God) | Don’t condemn me, tell me the ground of thy complaint.Thy hands gave me shape and made me;Dost thou at once turn and destroy me?Why didst thou bring me out of the womb? |
| Zophar (ch 11)(stern, rational, finger-wagging, directive, authoritarian) | Will no-one answer all this nonsense?Is your endless talk to reduce people to silence?If only God would speakand expound to you the secrets of wisdom!Can you fathom the mystery of the Almighty?He surely knows which human beings are false.If only you had directed your heart rightlyand spread out your hands to pray to him!If you have wrongdoing in hand, throw it away.Then life will be lasting, bright as noonday. |
| Job (chs 12-14) | No doubt absolute wisdom is yours,but I have sense as well as you.Yet I am a laughing-stock to my friend,though I am innocent and blameless.Ah, if you would only be silentand let silence be your wisdom.Is it on God’s behalf that you speak so wickedly?He will most surely expose youif you take his part by falsely accusing me. |
| (to audience) | I will take my life in my hands.If he would slay me, I should not hesitate,I should still argue my cause to his face. |
| (to God) | Let me know my offenses and my sin,Why dost thou hide thy faceand treat me as thy enemy?A human being born of woman is short-lived and full of disquiet.Look away from me therefore and leave me alone. |
| (to self) | If a tree is cut down,there is hope that it will sprout again.But a human being dies, disappears,never to be roused from sleep.If only thou wouldst hide me in Sheoltill thy anger turns aside.But now thou dost count every step I take.Every offense of mine is stored in thy bag.Thou hast wiped out the hope of frail humanity. |
| Eliphaz (ch 15) | Would a man of sense give vent to such foolish notions?You are condemned out of your own mouth.Were you the first person to be born?What do you know that we do not know?Does not the consolation of God suffice you,a word whispered quietly in your ear?What makes you so bold at heart,that you pour out such a torrent of words?What are frail human beings that they should be innocent?I will describe to you what I have seen.The wicked are racked with anxiety all their days;the ruthless cannot hope to escape from dark death.The godless conceive mischief and give birth to trouble. |
| Job (chs 16-17) | I have heard all that before,you who make trouble, all of you, with every breath.If you and I were to change places,I could talk like you.But no, I would speak words of encouragement. |
| (to himself) | If I speak, my pain is not eased;if I am silent, it does not leave me.Meanwhile, my friend wearies me with false sympathy.My enemies look daggers at me.God has set upon me and mauled me. |
| (out loud) | O earth, cover not my bloodand let my cry for justice find no rest!My witness is in heaven;there is one on high ready to answer for me. |
| (to himself) | If only there were one to arbitrate between humanity and God,as between a human being and a neighbor! |
| (to God) | Be thou my surety with thyself,for who else can pledge himself for me? |
| Bildad (ch 18) | How soon will you bridle your tongue?Do but think, and then we will talk.Is the earth to be deserted to prove you right,or mountains be moved for you?No, it is the wicked whose light is extinguished.Their disobedience trips them up.The terrors of death suddenly beset them.Death’s terrors escort them to their king. |
| Job (ch 19) | How long will you torment me with words?I tell you, God himself has put me in the wrong.He has walled in my path so that I cannot break away.Why do you pursue me as God pursues me? |
| (to audience) | O that my words might be inscribed,cut with an iron tool to be a witness in hard rock!But I know that my vindicator livesand that he will rise last to speak in court.I shall see God himself with my own eyes. |
| Zophar (ch 20) | My distress of mind forces me to reply.I have heard arguments that are a reproach to me.The triumph of the wicked is short-lived.The heavens will lay bare their guiltand earth will rise up to condemn them. |
| Job (ch 21) | Listen to me, just listen to me,and let that be the comfort you offer me.Why do the wicked enjoy long life,hale in old age, great and powerful?How often does God in his anger deal out suffering?I know you are thinking,“Where is the great man’s home now?What has become of the home of the wicked?”The wicked are spared when disaster comes,no-one requites them for what they have done. |
| Eliphaz (ch 22) | Do not think that he reproves you because your are pious.It is because your depravity passes all bounds.You refuse bread to the hungry,widows you have sent away empty-handed,orphans you have struck defenseless.You say, “What does God know?”If you come back to the Almighty in true sincerity,you will pray to him and he will hear you.God brings down the pride of the haughty,but he will deliver the innocent. |
| Job (chs 23-24)(to himself) | If only I knew how to find him,I would state my case before him.If I go forward, he is not there;if backward, I cannot find him;when I turn left, I do not observe him;I face right, but I see him not.But he knows me in action or at rest;my feet have kept to the path he set me.The Almighty fills me with fear,yet I am not reduced to silence by the mystery which hides him.The wicked move boundary stones,carry away flocks and their shepherds,jostle the poor out of the way,rebel against the light of day;in the welter of night they are at home.Yet God in his strength carries off even the mighty. |
| Bildad (ch 25) | Authority and awe rest with him.How then can a human being be justified in God’s sight,or one born of woman be innocent? |
| Job (chs 26–27)(with sarcasm) | What help you have given to the man without resource! What wise counsel you offer! |
| (to audience) | God spreads the canopy of the sky over chaos.He fixed the horizon on the surface of the watersat the farthest limits of light and darkness.These are but the fringe of his power;and how faint the whisper that we hear of him! |
| (to friends) | I swear by God, who has denied me justice:till death I will not abandon my claim to innocence.This is the lot prescribed by God for the wicked:disaster overtakes them like a flood,and a storm snatches them away in the night. |
| Interlude (ch 28) |  |
| Narrator 2 (a poem which comments on the debate, and suggests an implicit judgment on both Job and his friends) | There are mines for silverand places to refine gold;where iron is won from the earthand copper smelted from the ore;the end of the seam lies in darkness,and it is followed to its farthest limit.No bird of prey knows the way there,and the falcon’s keen eye cannot see it;proud beasts do not set foot on it,and no serpent comes that way.Miners sets their hand to the granite rockand lay bare the roots of the mountains;and lay galleries in the rocks,and gems of every kind meet their eye;they dam up the sources of the streamsand bring the hidden riches of the earth to light.But where can wisdom be found?And where is the source of understanding?No-one knows the way to it;it is not found in the land of the living.The depths of ocean say, “It is not in us,”and the sea says, “It is not with me.”Red gold cannot buy it,nor can its price be weighed out in silver;it cannot be set in the scales against gold of Ophir,against precious cornelian or lapis lazuli;gold and crystal are not to be matched with it,no work in fine gold can be bartered for it; |
|  | black coral and alabaster are not worth mention,and a parcel of wisdom fetches more than red coral;topaz from Ethiopia is not to be matched with it,it cannot be set in the scales against pure gold.Where then does wisdom come from,and where is the source of understanding?No creatures on earth can see it,and it is hidden from the birds of the air.Destruction and death say,“We know of it only by report.”But God understands the way to it,he alone knows its source;for he can see to the ends of the earthand he surveys everything under heaven.When he made a counterpoise for the windand measured out the waters in proportion,when he laid down a limit for the rainand a path for the thunderstorm,even then he saw wisdom and took stock of it,he considered it and fathomed its very depths.And he said to human beings:Reverence for Yahweh is wisdom,and to turn from evil is understanding. |
| **SCENE 3** (chs 29–37) |  |
| Job (chs 29–31)(his final review of his situation) | If I could only go back to the days when God was watching over me,When his lamp shone above my head,and by its light I walked through the darkness.If I went through the gate out of the townto take my seat in the public square,people listened to me expectantly;when I had spoken, no-one spoke again.But now I am laughed to scornby people of a younger generation.My soul is in turmoil within me.I call for thy help, but thou dost not answer.Yet does not God himself see my ways?If my steps have wandered from the path,may another eat what I sow,and may my crops be pulled out by the roots!If my heart has been enticed by another woman,may my wife be taken by another man.If I have withheld their needs from the poor,or let the widow’s eye grow dim with tears,or raised my hand against the innocent,then may my shoulder-blade be torn from my shoulder. |
|  | If I have put my faith in gold,if I have raised my hand in homage to the sun,I should have been unfaithful to God on high.Have I rejoiced at the ruin of one that hated me?Have I ever concealed my misdeeds as people do?Let the Almighty state his case against me.I would plead the whole record of my lifeand present that in court as my defense. |
| Elihu (chs 32–37)(storming in as the angry young man and addressing friends) | I am young in years and you are old;that is why I held back from displaying my knowledge in front of you.But the spirit of God himself in human beings gives understanding;it is not only the old who are wise.Therefore I say, listen to me.I have been waiting while you sought for phrases,but not one of you refutes Job or answers his arguments. |
| (to Job) | Come now, Job, listen to my words. |
| Job | I am innocent. God finds occasions to put me in the wrong. |
| Elihu | You are wrong. In dreams, in visions of the night, God makes people listen and his correction strikes them with terror.Or they learn their lessons on a bed of pain;if they entreat God to show favor,then they save themselves from going down to the pit. |
| Job (interrupting) | I am innocent. I have done no wrong. |
| Elihu (to audience) | Was there ever someone like Job,with his thirst for irreverent talk,a fellow-traveler with the wicked?For he says that it brings a person no profit to find favor with God.Job gives vent to windy nonsense. |
| (to Job) | Listen, Job. Consider God’s wonderful works.Can you beat out the vault of the skies, as he does?Can anyone dictate to God what he is to speak?The Almighty we cannot find; his power is beyond our ken,and his righteousness not slow to do justice. |
| **SCENE 4** (chs 38–42) |  |
| Narrator 2 | Then Yahweh answered Job out of the tempest. |
| God (chs 38–39) | Who is this whose ignorant wordscloud my design in darkness?Brace yourself and stand up like a man;I will ask questions, and you shall answer.Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations?Tell me, if you know and understand.Who settled its dimensions? Surely you should know.Who stretched his measuring-line over it?On what do its supporting pillars rest?Who set its corner-stone in place,when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted aloud?Who watched over the birth of the sea,when it burst in flood from the womb?—when I wrapped it in a blanket of cloud and cradled it in fog,when I established its bounds,fixing its doors and bars in place,and said, ‘Thus far shall you come and no farther,and here your surging waves shall halt.’In all your life have you ever called up the dawnor shown the morning its place?Have you descended to the springs of the seaor walked in the unfathomable deep?Have the gates of death been revealed to you?Have you ever seen the door-keepers of the place of darkness?Have you ever comprehended the vast expanse of the world?come, tell me all this, if you know.Which is the way to the home of light and where does darkness dwell?And can you then take each to its appointed boundand escort it on its homeward path?Doubtless you know all this; for you were born already,so long is the span of your life!Have you visited the storehouse of the snowor seen the arsenal where hail is stored,which I have kept ready for the day of calamity,for war and for the hour of battle?By what paths is the heat spread abroador the east wind carried far and wide over the earth?Who has cut channels for the downpourand cleared a passage for the thunderstorm,for rain to fall on land where no-one livesand on the deserted wilderness,clothing lands waste and derelict with greenand making grass grow on thirsty ground?Has the rain a father?Who sired the drops of dew?Whose womb gave birth to the ice,and who was the mother of the frost from heaven,which lays a stony cover over the watersand freezes the expanse of ocean? |
|  | Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose Orion’s belt?Did you proclaim the rules that govern the heavens,or determine the laws of nature on earth?Can you command the dense cloudsto cover you with their weight of waters?If you bid lightening speed on its way,will it say to you, “I am ready”?Who put wisdom in depths of darknessand veiled understanding in secrecy?Who is wise enough to marshal the rain-cloudsand empty the cisterns of heaven,when the dusty soil sets hard as iron,and the clods of earth cling together?Do you hunt her prey for the lionessand satisfy the hunger of young lions,as they crouch in the lair or lie in wait in the covert?Who provides the raven with its quarrywhen its fledglings croak for lack of food?Do you know when the mountain-goats are bornor attend the wild doe when she is in labor?Who has let the wild ass of Syria range at willand given the wild ass of Arabia its freedom?Does the wild ox consent to serve you,does it spend the night in your stall?Did you give the horse his strength?Did you clothe his neck with a mane?Does your skill teach the hawk to use its pinionsand spread its wings towards the south?Do you instruct the vulture to fly high and build its nest aloft? |
|  | Is it for a human being who disputes with the Almighty to be stubborn?Should one who argues with God answer back? |
| Job | What reply can I give thee, I who carry no weight?I put my finger to my lips.I have spoken once and now will not answer again;twice I have spoken, and I will do so no more. |
| Narrator 2 | Then Yahweh answered Job out of the tempest. |
| God (chs 40–41) | Brace yourself and stand up like a man;I will ask questions, and you shall answer.Dare you deny that I am justor put me in the wrong that you may be right?Have you an arm like God’s arm,can you thunder with a voice like his? |
|  | Deck yourself out, if you can, in pride and dignity,array yourself in pomp and splendor;unleash the fury of your wrath,look upon the proud and humble them;look upon all the proud and bring them low,throw down the wicked where they stand;hide them in the dust together,and shroud them in an unknown grave.Then I in my turn will acknowledgethat your own right hand can save you. |
|  | Consider Behemoth, which I made with you,who devours cattle as if they were grass;what strength is in his loins!What power in the muscles of his belly!He is the chief of God’s works,made to be a tyrant over his peers;There under the thorny lotus he lies,hidden in the reeds and the marsh.Can a human being blind his eyes and take himor pierce his nose with the teeth of a trap?Can you pull out Leviathan with a gaffor slip a noose round its tongue?Will it plead with you for mercy?Will you toy with it as with a bird?Can you fill his skin with harpoonsor his head with fish-hooks? If ever you lift your hand against him,think of the struggle that awaits you, and let be.No, such a person is in desperate case,hurled headlong at the very sight of him.How fierce he is when he is roused!Who is there to stand up to him?His heart is firm as a rock,firm as the ne7ther millstone.When he raises himself the strong take fright,bewildered at the lashings of his tail.Sword or spear, dagger or javelin,if they touch him, they have no effect.He makes the deep water boil like a cauldron,he whips up the lake like ointment in a mixing-bowl.He leaves a shining trail behind him,and the great river is like white hair in his wake.He has no equal on earth;for he is made quite without fear.He looks down on all creatures, even the highest;he is king over all proud beasts. |
| Job (ch 42) | I acknowledge that thou canst do all thingsand that no purpose is beyond thee. |
|  | I have spoken of great things which I have not understood,things too wonderful for me to know.I knew of thee then only by report,But now I see thee with my own eyes.Therefore I melt away;I repent over dust and ashes |
| Narrator 2 | When Yahweh had finished speaking to Job, he spoke to Eliphaz. |
| God | I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken as you ought about me, as my servant Job has done. So now go and offer a sacrifice for yourselves, and Job will intercede for you. |
| Narrator 1 | Yahweh showed favor to Job when he interceded for his friends. His brothers and sisters and acquaintances consoled and comforted him for all the misfortunes which Yahweh had brought on him. Yahweh blessed the end of Job’s life more than the beginning. He had sons and daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He died at a very great age. |