

Sense vs. Sovereignty

Job 14: 1-7

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I. Sense vs. 1-2

- a. Man- “Man born of woman” is a poetic way of saying “everyone.” Contrary to the claims of the friends (8:12–13), the situation described here applies to righteous and wicked alike.
- b. Of few days, and full of trouble, Cometh forth ..., Fleeth, etc.—*Born of woman*] of such frail origin.—*Of few days*] even a life of patriarchal length (42:16) may be regarded as brief (Gn. 47:9).—*Trouble*] 3:17(n.), 26.
- c. Short-Lived
 - i. Full of Turmoil – agitation
 1. Two main meanings can be distinguished: descriptions of states of mind, and descriptions of physical states. The states of mind may be classified into three broad categories: first, those where an individual is or might be the object of contempt, derision or humiliation; second, those where he feels bashfulness or shyness; third, those where he feels respect or awe.
 2. There is a kind of contrast in the next two phrases. Our “days” are too “few,” and our “troubles” (cf. 3:17, 26) are too many; in fact, we are “full” of them. The verb form of the noun translated “trouble” means “tremble/quake” as in an earthquake (9:6; 1 Sam 14:15). It also describes persons trembling because of inner turmoil (2 Sam 18:33; Isa 14:2; 32:10–11).
 3. How strange (cp.13:28) that God should strictly call to account creatures so frail, short-lived, and (cp 7:1–3) full of unrest as man!
 4. “Turmoil,” which רגז signifies (not simply “trouble”) is the “tumult of feeling and the onslaught of sufferings” cf. also on 3:17, 26. Job is full of, “satiated with” (שבע), restlessness (7:4) and shame (10:15); it is this fullness that makes him empty, dried up, and feeble.
 - 5.
- d. Temporary
 - i. Flower
 1. Forth and Withers
 - a. Job compared the brevity of life to a “flower,” quickly springing up and soon withering away, and to a “shadow” that vanishes at noon or at sunset. The figure of the dying flower is used in Jas 1:10; Pss 37:2; 90:5–6; and Isa 40:6–7.

Bildad, David, and Qoheleth compared life to a shadow (Job 8:9; 1 Chr 29:15; Pss 102:11; 144:4; Eccl 6:12).

- b. For the image of the flower as short-lived, cf. Ps 103:15–16; Isa 28:1, 4; 40:6–8; James 1:10, 11; 1 Pet 1:24 (grass: 2 Kgs 19:26; Ps 37:2; 90:6; 102:12 [11]; 129:6). The picture is generally of the fresh growth in the spring which comes to an untimely end before the hot east winds of summer. Here, however, it is possible that the means “cut off,” not “fade” (see n. 14:2.) the image is that of the spring flowers being cut down by the reaper’s sickle along with the grain in May or June
- ii. Shadow transitory as shadows
 - 1. Does not Remain
 - 2. For the image of the shadow as swift, cf. 8:9; Ps 102:12 [11]; 109:23; 144:4; Eccl 6:12; 1 Chr 29:15.

II. Sovereignty v. 3-6

- a. Open
 - i. Eyes
 - 1. Such human frailty and impermanence is contrasted with the divine inquisition, which is of course thorough and long extended. To “open the eye(s)” (פקח עין) is here to pay attention to; what is elsewhere met with as an appeal for God’s care (Isa 37:17; Jer 32:19) is here turned against him
- b. Bring
 - i. Him into Judgment
 - 1. Such trials (Job’s is the model of all such trials) *begin* with punishment, presumably in the form of pre-trial “arrest” of the defendant by the plaintiff. Job himself certainly wants a trial with God now that he finds his character blackened; but without self-contradiction regards the whole concept of God willfully entering into legal disputation with humans as inappropriate and disproportionate to the relative power of humanity and God. A psalmist could contrast the brevity of human life with God’s greatness in order to stress his goodness (Ps 103:15–17), but Job is made of sterner stuff—or, should we say, more sensitive matter.
- c. Clean
 - i. Make Clean
 - 1. Out of Unclean
 - a. Job never claimed to be sinless, only that his sin was an insufficient explanation for his suffering. In view of the

sinful condition of humanity, he demanded to know why his sins deserved such treatment.

- b. And his point about humankind does not depend upon all human beings being always sinners; it has to do with the potential sinfulness of humankind, whose moral fallibility is a kind of correlate of their physical frailty and impermanence. In some respects Job would not dissent from Eliphaz's words, "Can a man be pure in the sight of his Maker?" (4:17);

d. Days are Numbered

- i. Determined - **determine**; judgement
- ii. Number of Months With You
- iii. Limits Set - what is stipulated, determined, term
 - 1. The number of human days is "determined" (חרוין), the accent being on the irrevocability of the divine decree Isa 10:22; Joel 4:14 [3:14]; Dan 9:26, 27; 11:36). Likewise the months of human life are "known" to God, lit, "with you" (אתך), in your knowledge or memory; for such a meaning of את "with," cf. Isa 59:12; Prov 2:1; Gen 40:14 Days and months together add to a total which is humankind's "limit" (חֶק "prescribed thing"); the term is used in v 13 of a prescribed time, and elsewhere of the prescribed limit of the sea (26:10; 38:10; Jer 5:22; Prov 8:29), of the heavens (Ps 148:6) and of the land of Israel (Mic 7:11). To "pass over" (עבר) a "prescribed limit" (חֶק) sounds like a legal expression meaning to "transgress a decree" (the exact phrase is not actually attested in the Hebrew Bible); some play may be made with the idea that any "overstepping" (עבר) the divine prescription of one's fixed span of life would be like a "transgression" (עבר) of a divine law. There is no thought here of the lifespan of any individual being predetermined, but simply that humankind's allotted span (at whatever number of years it may be set) is a trifling period

e. Turn your Gaze

- i. Turn *Look away from*] 7:19, 10:20 n.—*And forbear*] or *desist*, 7:16 n. *That he may cease.*—*Till*] or:
 - 1. *to the point that* I will snatch what pleasure I can—if any!—from the days that are left to me. Of course it will be a relief to be rid of the oppressive burden of God's scrutiny, once he has taken his eyes "from off" (מעליו) humankind—which is to say, Job.
- ii. He May Rest- to **be successful**
- iii. Until He fulfills
 - 1. Like a hired Man

2. If, as is the case (1f.), man's life is brief, the fact is both known to and ordained by God; let God, then, desist (6a) from His unkindly gaze (3), that man may get at least some pleasure before his brief hard life is over.
3. "[Job] desires that God would grant man the comparative rest of the hireling, who must toil in sorrow and eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, but still is free from any special suffering, by not laying extraordinary affliction on him in addition to the common infirmities beneath which he sighs." ,