



Did Job Recant?

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Job on 9 Av

תענית ל א: כָּל מִצְוֹת הַנוֹהֲגוֹת
בְּאַבְל — נוֹהֲגוֹת בְּתַשְׁעָה בְּאַב;
. . . וְאַסּוּר לְקִרְוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה בַּנְּבִיאִים
וּבְכְתוּבִים, וּלְשָׁנוֹת בַּמִּשְׁנָה
בַּתְּלִמּוּד וּבַמִּדְרָשׁ וּבַהֲלָכוֹת
וּבַאֲגָדוֹת. . . אַבְל . . . וְשׁוֹנָה
בַּמָּקוֹם שֶׁאֵינוֹ רָגִיל לְשָׁנוֹת, וְקוֹרֵא
בְּקִינּוֹת, **בְּאִיּוֹב**, וּבַדְּבָרִים הָרַעִים
שֶׁבִירְמִיָּה.

Taanit 30a: All mitzvot practiced by a mourner are likewise practiced on the Ninth of Av; . . . It is prohibited to read from the Torah, from the Prophets, and from the Writings, or to study from the Mishna, from the Gemara, and from midrash, and from collections of halakhot, and of aggadot. . . . However, . . . they may read from a text that they are unaccustomed to reading. And they may read from the book of Lamentations; **from the book of Job**; and from the prophecies of doom in Jeremiah.

Difficulties of Job



Inscrutable language



Challenging theology

Job 42: Job's last words

וַיַּעַן אִיּוֹב אֶת־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר . . .
לִשְׁמַע־אָזְן שָׁמַעְתִּיךָ
וְעַתָּה עֵינַי רָאִיתְךָ:
עַל־כֵּן אֶמָּאֵס וְנַחֲמֹתִי
עַל־עָפָר וָאֶפֶר:

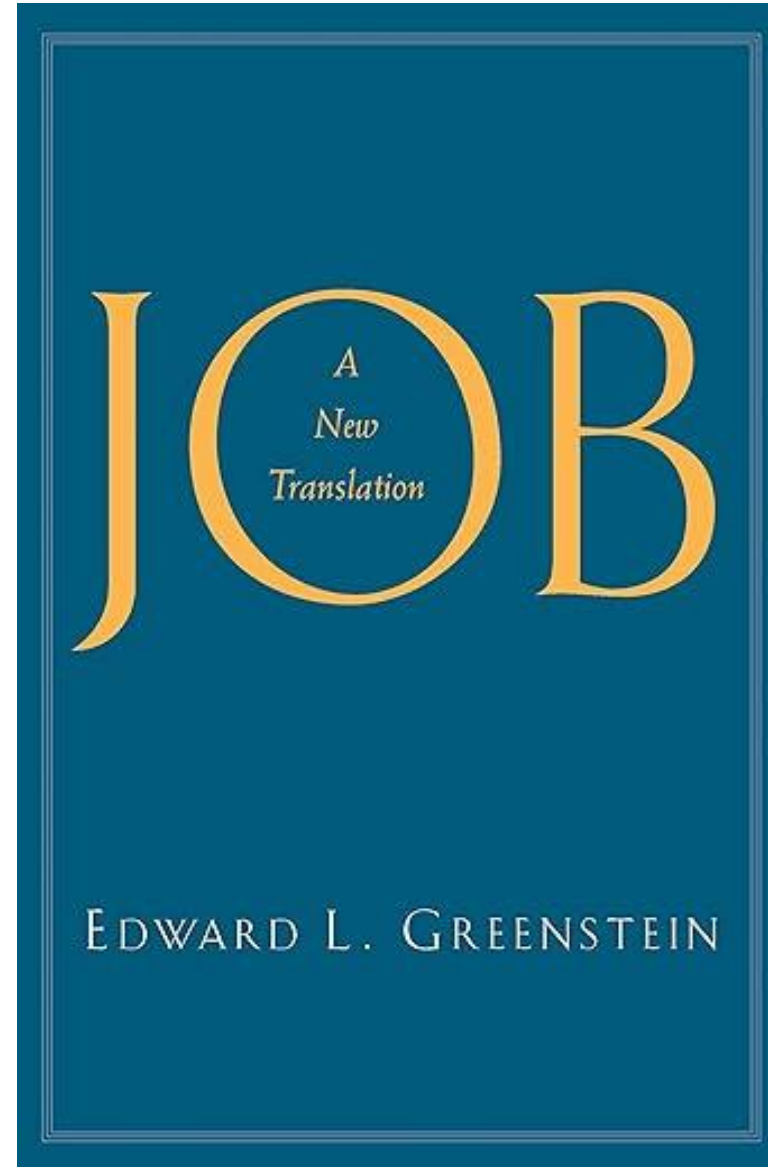
NJPS Job said in reply to the LORD:...

I had heard You with my ears,
But now I see You with my eyes;
Therefore, I recant and relent,
Being but dust and ashes

King James: Wherefore I abhor myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.

Revised Standard Version: therefore I
despise myself, and repent in dust and
ashes.

A New
Interpretation



Job 1

אִישׁ הָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ עוּץ אִיּוֹב שְׁמוֹ
וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא **תָּם וְיָשָׁר וִירָא**
אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מֵרָע. . . וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם
וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לְהִתִּיצֵב עַל ה'
וַיָּבֹא גַם הַשָּׁטָן בְּתוֹכָם. זַ וַיֹּאמֶר
ה' אֶל הַשָּׁטָן מֵאֵין תָּבֹא וַיַּעַן
הַשָּׁטָן אֶת ה' וַיֹּאמֶר מִשׁוּט בְּאֶרֶץ
וּמִהֲתֵהֵלךְ בָּהּ. ח וַיֹּאמֶר
. . . ה' אֶל הַשָּׁטָן הֲשִׁמְתָּ לְבָבְךָ עַל
עַבְדִּי אִיּוֹב כִּי אֵין כָּמוֹהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ
אִישׁ **תָּם וְיָשָׁר יִירָא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר**
מֵרָע

There was a man in the land of Uz
named Job. That man was **blameless**
and upright; he feared God and
shunned evil. . . . One day the divine
beings presented themselves before the
LORD, and the Adversary came along
with them. The LORD said to the
Adversary, "Where have you been?"
The Adversary answered the LORD, "I
have been roaming all over the earth."
The LORD said to the Adversary, "Have
you noticed My servant Job? There is no
one like him on earth, a **blameless and**
upright man who fears God and shuns
evil."

Job 1 (cont.)

ט וַיַּעַן הַשָּׂטָן אֶת ה' וַיֹּאמֶר
הַחֲנָם יָרָא אֱיֹיֵב אֱלֹהִים. י
הֲלֹא אֶתָּה שָׂכַתָּ בַּעֲדוֹ וּבַעֲד
בֵּיתוֹ וּבַעֲד כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ מִסָּבִיב
מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו בִּרְכָתָּ וּמִקְנֶהוּ
פָּרֶץ בָּאָרֶץ. יא וְאוֹלָם שָׁלַח נָא
יָדְךָ וְגַע בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ אִם לֹא
עַל פָּנֶיךָ יִבְרָכְךָ. יב וַיֹּאמֶר ה'
אֵל הַשָּׂטָן הִנֵּה כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ
בְּיָדְךָ רַק אֵלֹיו אֵל תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ

. . .

The Adversary answered the LORD,
“Does Job not have good reason to
fear God? Why, it is You who have
fenced him round, him and his
household and all that he has. You
have blessed his efforts so that his
possessions spread out in the land.
But lay Your hand upon all that he
has, and he will surely blaspheme
You to Your face. The LORD replied to
the Adversary, “See, all that he has is
in your power; only do not lay a
hand on him.”

Job 1 (cont.)

... וַיָּבֹא אֲחֵר וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֵיךָ וּבָנוֹתֶיךָ
אֹכְלִים וְשׂוֹתִים יִין בְּבֵית אָחִיהֶם
הַבְּכוֹר: וְהִנֵּה רוּחַ גְּדוֹלָה בָּאָה
מֵעֵבֶר הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּגַע בְּאַרְבַּע פְּנוֹת
הַבַּיִת וַיִּפֹּל עַל-הַנְּעָרִים וַיָּמוּתוּ:
וְאַמְלָטָה רַק-אֲנִי לְבַדִּי לְהִגִּיד לָךְ:
וַיָּקָם אִיּוֹב וַיִּקְרַע אֶת מְעָלוֹ וַיִּגְזַח אֶת
רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּפֹּל אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה.

... Another [messenger] came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother when suddenly a mighty wind came from the wilderness. It struck the four corners of the house so that it collapsed upon the young people and they died; I alone have escaped to tell you." Then Job arose, tore his robe, cut off his hair, and threw himself on the ground and worshiped.

Job 1 (cont.)

וַיֹּאמֶר עָרָם יֵצְאֹתִי מִבֶּטֶן
אִמִּי וְעָרָם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה ה'
נָתַן וְה' לָקַח יְהִי שֵׁם ה'
מְבָרָךְ. בְּכָל זֹאת לֹא חָטָא
אִיּוֹב וְלֹא נָתַן תִּפְלָה
לֵאלֹהִים.

He said, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD has given, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” For all that, Job did not sin, nor did he cast reproach on God.

Job 2

וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ עֲדָךְ מִחֲזִיק
בְּתַמָּתְךָ בָּרַךְ אֱלֹהִים וּמָת:
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ כְּדַבֵּר אַחַת
הַנְּבָלוֹת תִּדְבְּרִי גַם אֶת־הַטּוֹב
נִקְבֵּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים
וְאֶת־הָרָע לֹא נִקְבֵּל בְּכָל־זֹאת
לֹא־חָטָא אִיּוֹב בְּשִׁפְתָיו:

His wife said to him, “You still keep your integrity! Blaspheme God and die!” But he said to her, “You talk as any shameless woman might talk! Should we accept only good from God and not accept evil?” For all that, Job said nothing sinful.

Job 2

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת רֵעֵי אִיּוֹב אֶת
כָּל־הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת הַבָּאָה עָלָיו
וַיָּבֹאוּ אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ אֶל־יֹפֶז
הַתִּימָנִי וּבְלֶדַד הַשׁוּחִי וְצוֹפָר
הַנַּעֲמָתִי . . . וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אֹתוֹ
לָאָרֶץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְשִׁבְעַת
לַיְלֹת וְאִין־דָּבָר אֵלָיו דָּבָר כִּי
רָאוּ כִּי־גָדֹל הַכָּאֵב מְאֹד

When Job's three friends heard about all these calamities that had befallen him, each came from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. . . . They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. None spoke a word to him for they saw how very great was his suffering.

Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed 3:22

The story of Job, which is extraordinary and marvelous, . . . is a parable, intended to set forth the opinions of people on Divine Providence. You know that some of our Sages clearly stated (baba Batra 15a) Job לא היה ולא נברא אל מושל היה never existed and was never created, but was a parable. Those, on the other hand, who assume that he existed, and that the book is historical, are unable to determine when and where Job lived. Some of our Sages say that he lived in the days of the Patriarchs; others hold that he was a contemporary of Moses; others place him in the days of David, and again others believe that he was one of those who returned from the Babylonian exile.

Guide of the Perplexed (cont.)

This difference of opinion supports the assumption that he never existed in reality. But whether he existed or not, that which is related of him is an experience of frequent occurrence and is a source of perplexity to all thinkers. . . . Now, according to both opinions, that Job existed or that he never existed, the prologue—I mean the discourse of Satan, that of God addressed to Satan, and the giving-over [of Job to Satan's hands]—is indubitably, in the view of everyone endowed with intellect, a parable.

An example of what Job's friends say (chapter 8)

- (ג) הֲאֵל יַעֲוֶה מִשְׁפָּט וְאֵם שִׁדִּי יַעֲוֶה צְדָקָה.
Will God pervert the right? Will the Almighty pervert justice? If your sons sinned against Him, He dispatched them for their transgression. But if you seek God and supplicate the Almighty, If you are blameless and upright, He will protect you, And grant well-being to your righteous home. Though your beginning be small, In the end you will grow very great.
- (ד) אִם בְּנֵיךָ חָטְאוּ לוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם בְּיָד פְּשָׁעָם.
If your sons sinned against Him, He dispatched them for their transgression.
- (ה) אִם אַתָּה תִּשְׁחַר אֶל אֵל וְאֶל שִׁדִּי תִתְחַנֵּן.
If you seek God and supplicate the Almighty, If you are blameless and upright, He will protect you.
- (ו) אִם זֶךְ וַיִּשָּׂר אַתָּה כִּי עָתָה יַעֲרֵר עֲלֶיךָ וְשָׁלֵם נוֹת צְדָקָה.
And grant well-being to your righteous home. Though your beginning be small, In the end you will grow very great.
- (ז) וְהָיָה רֵאשִׁיתְךָ מִצָּעַר וְאַחֲרִיתְךָ יִשְׁגָּה מְאֹד.
In the end you will grow very great.

An example of an answer by Job (chapter 9)

וַיַּעַן אֵיּוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר. ב אֲמָנָם
יִדְעֹתִי כִּי כֵן וַיְמָה יִצְדֵּק אָנוּשׁ
עִם אֱלֹהִים. ג אִם־יִחַפֵּץ לָרִיב עִמּוֹ
לֹא־יַעֲנֶנּוּ אַחַת מִנִּי־אֱלֹהִים
... ז הָאֵלֵּם לַחֲרָס וְלֹא יִזְרַח
וּבַעַד כּוֹכָבִים יַחֲתֹם. ח נֹטָה
שָׁמַיִם לִבְדּוֹ וְדוֹרָךְ עַל בְּמֹתַי
יָם. ט עֹשֶׂה עָשׂ כְּסִיל וְכִימָה
וְחִדְרֵי תִמָּן. י עֹשֶׂה גְדִלוֹת עַד
אֵין חֶקֶר וְנִפְלְאוֹת עַד אֵין
מִסְפָּר. ...

Job said in reply: Indeed I know that it is so: Man cannot win a suit against God. If he insisted on a trial with Him, He would not answer one charge in a thousand. . . . Who commands the sun not to shine; Who seals up the stars; Who by Himself spread out the heavens, And trod on the back of the sea; Who made the Bear and Orion, Pleiades, and the chambers of the south wind; Who performs great deeds which cannot be fathomed, And wondrous things without number

Job 9 (cont.)

כֹּא תָם אֲנִי לֹא אֲדַע
נַפְשִׁי אֶמְאָס חַיִּי. כִּב
אֶחַת הִיא עַל כֵּן אֶמְרֹתִי
תָם וְרָשָׁע הוּא מְכַלֵּה

I am blameless—I am
distraught;
I am sick of life. It is all
one; therefore I say, “He
destroys the blameless
and the guilty.”

Job and his “friends”

איוב כב: הלא רעתך רבה . . . לא
מים עיף תשקה ומרעב תמנע לחם.
ואיש זרוע לו הארץ ונשוא פנים ישב
בה. אלמנות שלחת ריקם וזרעות
יתמים ידכא. על כן סביבותיה פחים
ויבהלך פחד פתאם

איוב כט: כי אמלט עני משוע ויתום
ולא עזר לו. ברכת אבד עלי תבא ולב
אלמנה ארנן.

Job 22: You know that your wickedness
is great, . . . You do not give the thirsty
water to drink; You deny bread to the
hungry. The land belongs to the strong;
The privileged occupy it. You have sent
away widows empty-handed; The
strength of the fatherless is broken.
Therefore snares are all around you,
And sudden terrors frighten you,

Job 29: I saved the poor man who cried
out, The orphan who had none to help
him. I received the blessing of the lost;
I gladdened the heart of the widow.

Job compares self to friends (chapter13)

א הֵן כָּל רְאֵתָהּ עֵינַי שָׁמְעָה אָזְנִי וַתֵּבֶן
לָהּ.

My eye has seen all this; My ear has heard and understood it.

ב כְּדַעְתְּכֶם יִדְעֹתִי גַם אֲנִי לֹא נֶפֶל אֲנֹכִי
מִכֶּם.

What you know, I know also; I am not less than you.

ג אוֹלָם אֲנִי אֶל שְׁדֵי אֲדֹבָר וְהוֹכַח אֶל אֵל
אֲחֹפֶץ.

Indeed, I would speak to the Almighty; I insist on arguing with God.

ד וְאוֹלָם אַתֶּם טִפְלֵי שִׁקָּר רִפְאִי אֵלֶּל
כָּלְכֶם.

But you invent lies; All of you are quacks.

ה מִי יִתֵּן הַחֲרֹשׁ תַּחֲרִישוֹן וַתְּהִי לָכֶם
לְחֻכְמָה.

If you would only keep quiet It would be considered wisdom on your part.

Job 42: God's last words

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אֱלִיפַז
הַתִּימָנִי חָרָה אַפִּי בְךָ
וּבִשְׁנֵי רֵעֶיךָ כִּי לֹא דִבַּרְתֶּם
אֵלַי נְכוֹנָה כְּעַבְדִּי אִיּוֹב:

The LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “I am incensed at you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about Me as did My servant Job.”

Talmudic attempts to find what Job “did wrong” (Baba Batra 16a)

אמר רב עפרא לפומיה דאיוב
חברותא כלפי שמיא (איוב ט, לג) לו
יש בינינו מוכיח ישת ידו על שנינו . .
. (איוב לא, א) ברית כרתי לעיני ומה
אתבונן על בתולה אמר רבא עפרא
לפומיה דאיוב איהו באחרניתא
אברהם אפילו בדידיה לא איסתכל
(איוב ז, ט) כלה ענן וילך כן יורד
שאל לא יעלה אמר רבא מכאן
שכפר איוב בתחיית המתים

Rav says: Dust should be put in the mouth of Job, may one act as if he is in a friendship with Heaven? But, Job said: “There is no arbiter between us, who may lay his hand upon us both” (Job 9:33). Job also said: “I have made a covenant with my eyes not to gaze upon a virgin?” (Job 31:1). Rava says: Dust should be put in the mouth of Job for saying this; he did not look at other women, but Abraham did not even look at his own wife. . . Job further said: “As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away, so he who goes down to the grave shall come up no more” (Job 7:9). Rava says: From here it may be inferred that Job denied the resurrection of the dead.

God and Job at the end of the book (chapter 38)

וַיַּעַן־ה' אֶת־אִיּוֹב מִן הַסְּעָרָה
וַיֹּאמֶר:

מִי זֶה מַחְשִׁיב עֵצָה בְּמִלִּין
בְּלִי־דַעַת:

אֶזְר־נָא כְּגֹבֵר חֲלָצִיךָ וְאַשְׂאֲלֶךָ
וְהוֹדִיעֲנִי:

אִיפֹה הָיִיתָ בְּיִסְדֵי־אָרֶץ הַגָּד
אִם־יִדְעָתָּ בִּינָה:

Then the LORD replied to Job out of the tempest and said:

Who is this who darkens counsel,
Speaking without knowledge?

Gird your loins like a man; I will
ask and you will inform Me.

Where were you when I laid the
earth's foundations?

Speak if you have understanding

God and Job at the end of the book (chapter 40)

וַיַּעַן ה' אֶת־אִיּוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר: הֲרַב
עִם־שֵׁדִי יִסּוֹר מוֹכִיחַ אֱלֹהִים
יַעֲנֶנָּה: וַיַּעַן אִיּוֹב אֶת־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר: הִנֵּה
קָלָתִי מָה אֲשִׁיבָךְ יְדִי שִׁמְתִּי
לְמוֹפִי: אֶחָת דִּבַּרְתִּי וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה
וְשֵׁנִים וְלֹא אוֹסִיף: וַיַּעַן־ה'
אֶת־אִיּוֹב מִן סְעָרָה וַיֹּאמֶר:
אֶזְרֹנָא כְּגִבֹּר חֲלָצִיךָ אֲשֶׁאֲלֶךָ
וְהוֹדִיעֲנִי: הֲאֵף תִּפְרֹ מִשְׁפָּטִי
תִּרְשִׁיעֲנִי לְמַעַן תִּצְדֹּק:

The LORD said in reply to Job. Shall one who should be disciplined complain against Shaddai? He who arraigns God must respond. Job said in reply to the LORD: *See, I am of small worth; what can I answer You? I clap my hand to my mouth. I have spoken once, and will not reply; Twice, and will do so no more.* Then the LORD replied to Job out of the tempest and said: Gird your loins like a man; I will ask, and you will inform Me. Would you impugn My justice? Would you condemn Me that you may be right?

וַיַּעַן ה' אֶת
אִיּוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר
הָרַב עִם שְׂדֵי
יִסּוֹר מוֹכִיחַ
אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶנָּה.

אבן עזרא: הרוב עם שדי יסור – הדרך מוסר הוא שיריב
אדם עם שדי. מוכיח אלוה יעננה – איוב שיוכיח השם, למה
לא יענה על זאת.

Raymond Scheindlin: One who brings Shaddai to court
should fight! He who charges a God should speak.

Edward Greenstein: Should one who censures charge
Shaddai? Should Eloah answer an accuser?

NJPS: Shall one who should be censured complain
against Shaddai?

Job 42 (Job's last speech)

וַיַּעַן אֱיֹיֵב אֶת־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר:

1. יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־כָל תּוֹכָל וְלֹא־יִבָּצֵר מִמָּךְ מְזֻמָּה:

2. **מִי זֶה מַעֲלִים עֲצָה בְּלִי־דַעַת** לָכֵן הִגַּדְתִּי וְלֹא אָבִין נִפְלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא אֵדָע:

3. **שָׁמַע־נָא וְאַנֹכִי אֲדַבֵּר אֲשַׁאלְךָ וְהוֹדִיעֲנִי:**

4. **לְשִׁמְע־אָזְן שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְעַתָּה עֵינִי רָאִיתְךָ:**

5. **עַל־כֵּן אֶמָּאס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עֲפָר וְאַפָּר:**

God and Job at the end of the book (chapter 38)

וַיַּעַן-ה' אֶת-אִיּוֹב מִן הַסְּעָרָה וַיֹּאמֶר:
מִי זֶה מַחְשִׁיב עֵצָה בְּמַלְיָן בְּלִי-דַעַת:
אֲזַר-נָא כְּגֹבֵר חֲלָצִיךָ וְאַשְׁאֲלֶךָ
וְהוֹדִיעַנִי:
אִיפֹה הָיִיתָ בְּיִסְדֵי-אָרֶץ הַגָּד אִם-יָדַעְתָּ
בִּינָה:

Then the LORD replied to Job out of the tempest and said:

Who is this who darkens counsel,
Speaking without knowledge?

Gird your loins like a man; I will
ask and you will inform Me.

Where were you when I laid the
earth's foundations?

Speak if you have understanding

Job 40

וַיַּעַן ה' אֶת־אִיּוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר׃ הֲרַב עִם־שָׂדֵי
יִסּוֹר מוֹכִיחַ אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶנָּה׃ וַיַּעַן אִיּוֹב אֶת־ה'
וַיֹּאמֶר׃ הֵן קָלָתִי מִה אֲשִׁיבָךְ יָדַי שְׁמֹתַי
לְמוֹפִי׃ אַחַת דִּבַּרְתִּי וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה וְשִׁתִּים
וְלֹא אוֹסִיף׃ וַיַּעַן־ה' אֶת־אִיּוֹב מִן סְעָרָה
וַיֹּאמֶר׃ **אֶזְרָא כְּגֹבַר חֲלָצִיךָ אֲשָׁאֲלֶךָ**
וְהוֹדִיעֲנִי׃ הֲאֵף תִּפְרֹ מִשְׁפָּטִי תִרְשָׁיעֲנִי
לְמַעַן תִּצְדִּיק׃

The LORD said in reply to Job. Shall one who should be disciplined complain against Shaddai? He who arraigns God must respond. Job said in reply to the LORD: See, I am of small worth; what can I answer You? I clap my hand to my mouth. I have spoken once, and will not reply; Twice, and will do so no more. Then the LORD replied to Job out of the tempest and said: Gird your loins like a man; I will ask, and you will inform Me. Would you impugn My justice?

מִי זֶה מַעְלִים
עֲצָה בְּלִי דַעַת
לָכֵן הִגַּדְתִּי וְלֹא
אָבִין נִפְלְאוֹת
מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא אֲדַע

Robert Alter: Job begins by a recognition of God's omnipotence, though it might be noted that he had conceded this attribute all along . . . raising doubts not about divine power but about divine justice.

Job is directly quoting God. He does this in order to grant the validity of God's challenge to him.

Edward Greenstein: Parodying the divine discourse through mimicry, Job expresses disdain toward the deity and pity toward humankind (and not acquiescence).

לִשְׁמַע-אָזְנוֹ שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְעַתָּה עֵינִי רָאִתְךָ

איוב יג: הֵן כָּל רְאֵתָה עֵינִי שָׁמְעָה אָזְנִי
וַתִּבֶּן לִּי.

ב כְּדַעְתְּכֶם יִדְעֹתִי גַם אֲנִי לֹא נֶפֶל אֲנֹכִי
מִכֶּם.

ג אוֹלָם אֲנִי אֶל שְׁדֵי אֲדֹבָר וְהוֹכַח אֶל אֵל
אֲחֹפֶץ.

ד וְאוֹלָם אַתֶּם טִפְלֵי שִׁקָּר רִפְּאִי אֵלֶּל
כָּלְכֶם.

ה מִי יִתֵּן הַחֲרָשׁ תַּחֲרִישׁוֹן וַיִּתְּהִי לָכֶם
לְחֻכְמָה.

Job 13: My eye has seen all this; My
ear has heard and understood it.

What you know, I know also; I am
not less than you.

Indeed, I would speak to the
Almighty; I insist on arguing with
God.

But you invent lies; All of you are
quacks.

If you would only keep quiet It would
be considered wisdom on your part.

Job 42 (Job's last speech)

וַיַּעַן אִיּוֹב אֶת־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר:

1. יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־כָל תּוֹכָל וְלֹא־יִבָּצֵר מִמֶּךָּ מִזְמָה:

2. מִי זֶה מַעֲלִים עֵצָה בְּלִי־דַעַת לָכֵן הִגַּדְתִּי וְלֹא אָבִין נִפְלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא אֲדַע:

3. שָׁמַע־נָא וְאַנֹכִי אֲדַבֵּר אֲשַׁאֲלֶךָ וְהוֹדִיעֲנִי:

4. לְשִׁמְע־אָזְן שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְעַתָּה עֵינִי רָאִיתְךָ:

5. עַל־כֵּן אֶמָּאס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עֶפֶר וְאֶפֶר:

וְלֹא יִבְצֹר מִמֶּךָּ מְזֻמָּה

מילון קדרי: מְזֻמָּה: על פי רוב כוונה ומחשבה להרע. . . . בספר משלי בלבד = דעת או תבונה (כמו ערמה)

. . . וְעַתָּה לֹא יִבְצֹר מֵהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת

now there will be no barrier for them in all that they scheme to do!

(Everett Fox)

Greenstein: Job speaks of the deity in the disdainful terms that God had spoken about the builders of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:6).

עַל כֵּן אֶמָּאס וְנַחֲמָתִי עַל עָפָר וָאֶפֶר

מיוחס לרשב"ם: מואס אני בחיים ואהיה מתנחם אילו הייתי שוכן בקבר לשוב אל עפר ואפר אשר לוקחתי משם. זהו עיקר פתרונו ואין להחליפו בפתרון אחר.

אבן עזרא: על כן אמאס – בכל דברי. ונחמתי על עפר ואפר – כי אנכי נבזה, כטעם:
ואנכי עפר ואפר (בראשית יח)

NJPS: Therefore, I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes.

Edward Greenstein: That is why I am fed up; I take pity on “dust and ashes” (=humanity).

עַל כֵּן אֶמָּאֵס (פרק מב)/מָאֲסֹתִי (פרק ז)

יא) גַּם אֲנִי לֹא אֶחְשָׁךְ פִּי אֲדַבֶּרָה בְּצַר רוּחִי אֲשִׁיחָה בְּמַר נִפְשִׁי. . .
טז) מָאֲסֹתִי לֹא לְעֹלָם אֶחְיֶה חֲדַל מִמֶּנִּי כִּי הֶבֶל יָמֵי.

רש"י: מאסתי – בחיי, כי סוף סוף לא לעולם אחיה.

Greenstein: I'm fed up! I won't live forever! Stop (tormenting) me! For my days are mere breath.

NJPS: I am sick of it; I shall not live forever. Let me be, for my days are a breath.

וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל עֲפָר וָאֶפֶר / וְהִנָּחֵם עַל עֲבָדֶיךָ (תהילים צ יג)

שׁוּבָה ה' עַד מָתִי וְהִנָּחֵם עַל עֲבָדֶיךָ

רש"י: וְהִנָּחֵם – חֲשׁוֹב מַחֲשָׁבָה טוֹבָה עַל עַבְדֶּיךָ.

NJPS: Show mercy to Your servants.

קדרי: נַחַם נפעל: 1. התחרט; 2. ריחם (וְלֹא אָחוּס וְלֹא אֶנְחָם [יחז' כד יד])

Two translations of Job's last speech

NJPS: I know that You can do everything,
That nothing You propose is impossible for
You.

Who is this who obscures counsel without
knowledge?

Indeed, I spoke without understanding Of
things beyond me, which I did not know.

Hear now, and I will speak; I will ask, and
You will inform me.

I had heard You with my ears, But now I see
You with my eyes;

Therefore, I recant and relent, Being but
dust and ashes

Greenstein: I have known you are able to do
all; That you cannot be blocked from any
scheme.

“Who is hiding counsel without
knowledge?”

Truly I've spoken without comprehending—
Wonders beyond me that I do not know.
[Greenstein: a mock concession.]

“Hear now and I will speak! I will ask you,
and you will help me know.”

As a hearing by the ear I have heard you,
and now my eye has seen you.

That is why I am fed up; I take pity on “dust
and ashes”!