

KEY

Archer = A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Gleason Archer). Chicago: Moody Press, 2007.

Ash = Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

BBC = The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Bush = Bush, Frederick. Ruth/Esther in the Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 9. Edited by David H. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Dallas: Word Books, 1996.

Frame = John Frame, Systematic Theology, P&R Publishing, 2013.

Grudem = Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1994.

Harrison = Introduction to the Old Testament (R.K. Harrison). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

K&D = Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F. in the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.

Swindoll = A Man of Heroic Endurance: Job (Charles Swindoll). Nashville, TN. W Publishing Group, 2004.

Talbert = *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* (Layton Talbert). Bob Jones University Press, 2007.

TWOT = The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; Bruce Waltke). Chicago: Moody Press, 1980. Two Volumes.

Walton = Old Testament Today. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Basic English Diagram / Structure

Did not spend much time on this — just trying to get a feel for the passage

12:1 Then Job responded,

2 “Truly then you are the people,
And with you wisdom will die!

3 “But I have intelligence as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
And who does not know such things as these?

4 “I am a joke to my friends,
The one who called on God
and He answered him;
The just and blameless man is a joke.

5 “He who is at ease
holds calamity in contempt,
As prepared for those whose feet slip.

6 “The tents of the destroyers prosper,
And those who provoke God are secure,
Whom God brings into their power.

7 “But now **ask**
the beasts,
and let them teach you;
And the **birds of the heavens**,
and let them tell you.

8 “Or **speak to the earth**,
and let it teach you;
And let the **fish of the sea**
declare to you.

9 “Who among all these does not know
10 That the hand of the LORD has done this,
In whose hand is the life of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind?

11 “Does not the ear test words,
As the palate tastes its food?

12 “Wisdom is with aged men,
With long life is understanding.

13 “With Him are wisdom and might;
To Him belong counsel and understanding.

14 “*Behold,*
He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt;
He imprisons a man, and there can be no release.

15 “*Behold,*
He restrains the waters, and they dry up;
And He sends them out, and they inundate the earth.

16 “With Him are strength and sound wisdom,
The misled and the misleader belong to Him.

17 “He makes counselors walk barefoot
And makes fools of judges.

18 “He loosens the bond of kings
And binds their loins with a girdle.

19 “He makes priests walk barefoot
And overthrows the secure ones.

20 “He deprives the trusted ones of speech
And takes away the discernment of the elders.

21 “He pours contempt on nobles
And loosens the belt of the strong.

22 “He reveals mysteries from the darkness
And brings the deep darkness into light.

23 “He makes the nations great, then destroys them;
He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.

24 “He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth’s people
And makes them wander in a pathless waste.

25 “They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

13:1 “*Behold,*
my eye has seen all this,
My ear has heard and understood it.

2 “What you know I also know;
I am not inferior to you.

3 “But I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to argue with God.

4 “But you smear with lies;
You are all worthless physicians.

5 “O that you would be completely silent,
And that it would become your wisdom!

6 “Please hear my argument
And listen to the contentions of my lips.

7 “Will you speak what is unjust for God,
And speak what is deceitful for Him?
8 “Will you show partiality for Him?
Will you contend for God?
9 “Will it be well when He examines you?
Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man?

10 “He will surely reprove you
If you secretly show partiality.
11 “Will not His majesty terrify you,
And the dread of Him fall on you?

12 “Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes,
Your defenses are defenses of clay.

13 “Be silent before me so that I may speak;
Then let come on me what may.

14 “Why should I take my flesh in my teeth
And put my life in my hands?

15 “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.

Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

16 “This also will be my salvation,
For a godless man may not come before His presence.

17 “Listen carefully to my speech,
And let my declaration fill your ears.

18 “*Behold*
now, I have prepared my case;
I know that I will be vindicated.

19 “Who will contend with me?
For then I would be silent and die.

20 “Only two things do not do to me,
Then I will not hide from Your face:
21 Remove Your hand from me,
And let not the dread of You terrify me.

22 “Then call, and I will answer;
Or let me speak, then reply to me.

23 “How many are my iniquities and sins?
Make known to me my rebellion and my sin.

24 “Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy?
25 “Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble?
Or will You pursue the dry chaff?
26 “For You write bitter things against me
And make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth.
27 “You put my feet in the stocks
And watch all my paths;
You set a limit for the soles of my feet,
28 While I am decaying like a rotten thing,
Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

14:1 “Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil.
2 “Like a flower he comes forth and withers.
He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.

3 “You also open Your eyes on him
And bring him into judgment with Yourself.

4 “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!
5 “Since his days are determined,
The number of his months is with You;
And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass.

6 “Turn Your gaze from him that he may rest,
Until he fulfills his day like a hired man.

7 “For there is hope for a tree,
When it is cut down,
that it will sprout again,
And its shoots will not fail.
8 “Though its roots grow old in the ground
And its stump dies in the dry soil,
9 At the scent of water it will flourish
And put forth sprigs like a plant.

10 “But man dies and lies prostrate.
Man expires, and where is he?
11 “As water evaporates from the sea,
And a river becomes parched and dried up,
12 So man lies down and does not rise.
Until the heavens are no longer,
He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.

13 “Oh that You
 would hide me in Sheol,
That You
 would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You,
That You
 would set a limit for me and remember me!

14 “If a man dies,
 will he live again?

 All the days of my struggle I will wait
 Until my change comes.

15 “You will call,
 and I will answer You;
You will long for the work of Your hands.

16 “For now You number my steps,
 You do not observe my sin.

17 “My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
 And You wrap up my iniquity.

18 “But the falling mountain crumbles away,
 And the rock moves from its place;

19 Water wears away stones,
 Its torrents wash away the dust of the earth;

 So You destroy man’s hope.

20 “You forever overpower him and he departs;
 You change his appearance and send him away.

21 “His sons achieve honor, but he does not know it;
 Or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive it.

22 “But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself.”

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

12:1 Then Job responded, 2 “Truly then you are the people, And with you wisdom will die! 3 “But I have intelligence as well as you; I am not inferior to you. And who does not know such things as these? 4 “I am a joke to my friends, The one who called on God and He answered him; The just and blameless man is a joke. 5 “He who is at ease holds calamity in contempt, As prepared for those whose feet slip. 6 “The tents of the destroyers prosper, And those who provoke God are secure, Whom God brings into their power. 7 “But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; And the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. 8 “Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; And let the fish of the sea declare to you. 9 “Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this, 10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind? 11 “Does not the ear test words, As the palate tastes its food? 12 “Wisdom is with aged men, With long life is understanding. 13 “With Him are wisdom and might; To Him belong counsel and understanding. 14 “Behold, He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt; He imprisons a man, and there can be no release. 15 “Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up; And He sends them out, and they inundate the earth. 16 “With Him are strength and sound wisdom, The misled and the misleader belong to Him. 17 “He makes counselors walk barefoot And makes fools of judges. 18 “He loosens the bond of kings And binds their loins with a girdle. 19 “He makes priests walk barefoot And overthrows the secure ones. 20 “He deprives the trusted ones of speech And takes away the discernment of the elders. 21 “He pours contempt on nobles And loosens the belt of the strong. 22 “He reveals mysteries from the darkness And brings the deep darkness into light. 23 “He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away. 24 “He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth’s people And makes them wander in a pathless waste. 25 “They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

13:1 “Behold, my eye has seen all this, My ear has heard and understood it. 2 “What you know I also know; I am not inferior to you. 3 “But I would speak to the Almighty, And I desire to argue with God. 4 “But you smear with lies; You are all worthless physicians. 5 “O that you would be completely silent, And that it would become your wisdom! 6 “Please hear my argument And listen to the contentions of my lips. 7 “Will you speak what is unjust for God, And speak what is deceitful for Him? 8 “Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? 9 “Will it be well when He examines you? Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man? 10 “He will surely reprove you If you secretly show partiality. 11 “Will not His majesty terrify you, And the dread of Him fall on you? 12 “Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, Your defenses are defenses of clay. 13 “Be silent before me so that I may speak; Then let come on me what may. 14 “Why should I take my flesh in my teeth And put my life in my hands? 15 “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. 16 “This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence. 17 “Listen carefully to my speech, And let my declaration fill your ears. 18 “Behold now, I have prepared my case; I know that I will be vindicated. 19 “Who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die. 20 “Only two things do not do to me, Then I will not hide from Your face: 21 Remove Your hand from me, And let not the dread of You terrify me. 22 “Then call, and I will answer; Or let me speak, then reply to me. 23 “How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my

rebellion and my sin. 24 “Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy? 25 “Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble? Or will You pursue the dry chaff? 26 “For You write bitter things against me And make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth. 27 “You put my feet in the stocks And watch all my paths; You set a limit for the soles of my feet, 28 While I am decaying like a rotten thing, Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

14:1 “Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. 2 “Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain. 3 “You also open Your eyes on him And bring him into judgment with Yourself. 4 “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one! 5 “Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass. 6 “Turn Your gaze from him that he may rest, Until he fulfills his day like a hired man. 7 “For there is hope for a tree, When it is cut down, that it will sprout again, And its shoots will not fail. 8 “Though its roots grow old in the ground And its stump dies in the dry soil, 9 At the scent of water it will flourish And put forth sprigs like a plant. 10 “But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he? 11 “As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up, 12 So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep. 13 “Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, That You would set a limit for me and remember me! 14 “If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my change comes. 15 “You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands. 16 “For now You number my steps, You do not observe my sin. 17 “My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And You wrap up my iniquity. 18 “But the falling mountain crumbles away, And the rock moves from its place; 19 Water wears away stones, Its torrents wash away the dust of the earth; So You destroy man’s hope. 20 “You forever overpower him and he departs; You change his appearance and send him away. 21 “His sons achieve honor, but he does not know it; Or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive it. 22 “But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself.”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

Bible Knowledge Commentary

- I. JOB’S FIRST REPLY TO ZOPHAR (CHAPS. 12–14)
 - A. Job’s repudiation of his friends (12:1–13:19)
 - B. Job’s presentation of his case to God (13:20–28)
 - C. Job’s despair of hope (chap. 14)

UBS Handbook Series

- I. Job Replies 12:1–14:22
 - A. Job Claims He is Just As Wise As the Friends (12:1–6)
 - B. God Has Given Wisdom to the Animals (12:7–12)
 - C. God is the Divine Destroyer (12:13–25)
 - D. Job’s Argument is with God (13:1–5)
 - E. Job Questions the Friends’ Worth As Witnesses Against Him (13:6–12)
 - F. Job Will Argue His Case Face to Face with God (13:13–16)

- G. Job Calls on God to Appear in Court with Him (13:17–23)
- H. Job Complains Again Against God (13:24–28)
- I. Job Describes the Briefness of Life (14:1–6)
- J. Job Complains That God Destroys His Hope to Live (14:7–22)

The Outline Bible

- I. Job's Defense (12:1-14:22): Now Job Must Defend Himself Against Zophar
 - A. What a Know-It-All! (12:1-6)
 - 1. Job Sarcastically Says that Zophar Knows Everything
 - B. Even the Animals Know (12:3-12)
 - 1. Job Asserts that Even the Animals Know that God Sometimes Allows the Evil to Scoff at the Good
 - C. God is Omniscient and Omnipotent (12:13-25)
 - 1. Job Knows that God Knows all and that He is in Control of Everything that Happens
 - D. Listen Rather Than Accuse (13:1-6)
 - 1. Job Challenges Zophar to Hear His Defense
 - E. Don't Put Words in God's Mouth! (13:7-12)
 - 1. Job Accuses Zophar of Using Lies to Defend God's Actions
 - F. I Will Risk Death to Declare My Innocence (13:13-19)
 - 1. Job is Willing to Risk Death to Speak His Mind to God and Prove His Innocence
 - G. Two Things I Beg of You (13:20-25)
 - 1. Job Asks God to Stop Afflicting Him and to Cease Terrifying Him with His Awesome Presence
 - H. God's Bitter Accusation (13:26-28)
 - 1. Job Feels that God Has Been Storing Up Accusations Against Him
 - I. Life is Short and Full of Trouble (14:1-6)
 - 1. Job Asks for a Little Mercy from God Since Humans Are So Frail
 - J. Death is Eternal (14:7-12)
 - 1. Job Declares that People, Unlike Trees that Sprout Again After they Are Cut Down, Never Rise Again After Death
 - K. Oh, to Live Again After Death (14:13-22)
 - 1. Job Wishes that God Would Think of Him After He Dies; That Would Give Him Hope. But He Does Not Seem to Believe That God Will Do So

Biblical Studies: Job (Sam Storms)

- I. Job's Third Speech (Job 12–14)
 - A. His Complaint Against his Friends (12:1–12; 13:1–19)
 - B. His Confession of God's Sovereignty (12:13–25)
 - C. His Cry to God for Deliverance (13:20–14:22)
 - 1. The Brevity of Life (vv. 1–6)
 - 2. The Finality of Death (vv. 7–17)
 - 3. The Absence of Hope (vv. 18–22)

The New American Commentary: Job (Robert L. Alden)

- I. Job Defends Himself and Prays to God (12:1–14:22)
 - A. Defense (12:1–3)
 - B. Exceptions (12:4–12)
 - 1. Rewards Do Not Match Behavior (12:4–6)
 - 2. Testimonies to Divine Sovereignty (12:7–12)
 - a. Animals (12:7–9)
 - b. Humans (12:10–12)
 - C. God’s Government of the World (12:13–25)
 - D. Defense and Complaint to the Friends (13:1–12)
 - E. Advice and Testimony (13:13–19)
 - F. Address to God (13:20–14:22)
 - 1. Relent and Explain (13:20–28)
 - 2. Brevity of Life (14:1–6)
 - 3. Finality of Death (14:7–17)
 - a. For All Humankind (14:7–12)
 - b. Job’s Hope after Death (14:13–17)
 - 4. Absence of Hope (14:18–22)

Be Patient: Job (Warren W. Wiersbe)

- I. Job’s Three Affirmations (Job 12–14)
 - A. The Greatness of God (Job 12)
 - B. The Integrity of Job (Job 13)
 - 1. Disappointment (vv. 1–12)
 - 2. Declaration (vv. 13–17)
 - 3. Desire (vv. 18–28)
 - C. The Hopelessness of Job (Job 14)

BASIC OUTLINE:

- I. Job’s Complaint Against his Friends (12:1–6; 13:1–2)
 - A. Connection to chapter 11: Job Knows These Things (12:1-3; 13:1-2)
 - 1. Review chapter 11
 - B. Job the Joke (12:4-6)
- II. Job’s Confession of God’s Sovereignty (12:7–25)
 - A. God is sovereign over the animals (12:7–9)
 - B. God is sovereign over mankind (12:10–12)
 - C. God is sovereign over the world (12:13–25)
- III. Job’s Cry to God for Deliverance (13:3–14:22)

SERMON OUTLINE:

- I. Job's Complaint Against his Friends (12:1–12; 13:1–2)
 - A. Connecting the Context to Chapter 11 (12:1-3; 13:1-2)
 - B. Job Defends His Epistemic Equality (v. 3)
 - C. Job the Joker (12:4)
 - D. Job Wonders Why He Suffers Needlessly (12:5-6)
- II. Job's Confession of God's Sovereignty (12:7–25)
 - A. Defined
 - B. God is Sovereign Over the Animal Kingdom (12:7–9)
 - C. God is Sovereign Over Mankind (12:10–12)
 - D. God is Sovereign over World Affairs (12:13–25)
- III. Job's Cry to God for Deliverance (13:3–14:22)
 - A. The Elusivity of God (13:3-28)
 - 1. Job's Desire (13:3)
 - a. God is Personal
 - b. God is Approachable
 - 2. Job's Dilemma (13:17-23)
 - B. The Brevity of Life (14:1–6)
 - C. The Finality of Death (14:7–17)
 - D. The Paucity of Hope (14:18–22)
 - 1. Job's Despair (14:18-22)
 - 2. Job's Determination (13:15-16)

Closing Thoughts . . .

- 1. God is Personal and Approachable
- 2. There are Times When God May Appear Elusive
- 3. The Answer is Jesus Christ

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): Job's First Reply to Zophar

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about): Consists of a complaint against them, a confirmation of God's sovereignty, and a cry to Him for deliverance

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): I May Not Know, but I Know I May Trust

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: I May Not Know, but I Know I May Trust

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: Job's First Reply to Zophar: I May Not Know, but I Know I May Trust

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

In chapter 11:

Zophar makes three accusations against Job: Job is guilty of sin (Job 11:1–4); Job is ignorant of God (vv. 5–12); and Job is stubborn in his refusal to repent (vv. 13–20). In his reply, Job answers all three accusations: He affirms God’s greatness (Job 12) and his own innocence (Job 13), but he has no hope, so why should he repent? (Job 14) [Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient, “Be” Commentary Series* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 45]

In chapters 12-14:

The arguments of the committee of three hardly silenced Job. In fact this speech is the longest so far. Job castigated his self-selected jurors and their view of God (12:1–13:19), and again turned to God with his case (13:20–14:22). [Roy B. Zuck, “Job,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 733]

The importance of this speech of Job, standing at the threshold between the first and second cycles, is marked by its length. It is the longest of all his speeches so far, and only his closing speech in chaps. 29–31 will be longer. At this position, the speech serves both as a first reply to the friends collectively and as the precipitating cause of the ensuing cycle of speeches. [David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 285]

This important speech of Job stands at the end of the first cycle of the speeches, after each of the friends has addressed him. There are two main sections: in the first, Job addresses his friends (12:2–13:18), and in the second, God (13:19–14:22). The movement of thought, even within the first section, is constantly away from the friends and towards God. The essence of the whole speech is: I want nothing to do with you worthless physicians (13:4); I desire to speak to the Almighty (13:3). [David J. A. Clines, “Job,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 467]

For a detailed overview of the chapters see David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 285ff.

VERSES 12:1-6

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Then Job responded, 2 “Truly then you are the people, And with you wisdom will die! 3 “But I have intelligence as well as you; I am not inferior to you. And who does not know such things as these? 4 “I am a joke to my friends, The one who called on God and He answered him; The just and blameless man is a joke. 5 “He who is at ease holds calamity in contempt, As prepared for those whose feet slip. 6 “The tents of the destroyers prosper, And those who provoke God are secure, Whom God brings into their power.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 Then Job answered and said: 2 “No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you. 3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these? 4 I am a laughingstock to my friends; I, who called to God and he answered me, a just and blameless man, am a laughingstock. 5 In the thought of one who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune; it is ready for those whose feet slip. 6 The tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure, who bring their god in their hand.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Then Job answered: 2 No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you! 3 But I also have a mind; I am not inferior to you. Who doesn't know the things you are talking about? 4 I am a laughingstock to my friends, by calling on God, who answers me. The righteous and upright man is a laughingstock. 5 The one who is at ease holds calamity in contempt and thinks it is prepared for those whose feet are slipping. 6 The tents of robbers are safe, and those who provoke God are secure; God's power provides this.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 Then Job replied: 2 “Doubtless you are the only people who matter, and wisdom will die with you! 3 But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things? 4 “I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called on God and he answered— a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless! 5 Those who are at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping. 6 The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure— those God has in his hand.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

A. Job Claims He is Just As Wise As the Friends (12:1–6)

1 Then Job responded,

Responded to Zophar (see previous study) and to the three friends in general (v. 2).

2 **“Truly then you are the people, And with you wisdom will die!**

“You are the people and with you wisdom will die” could be said of our modern celebrities. Sarcasm: the sun rises and sets with you! They know better. They are the wise guardians and we are the fools who ought to follow them. Sarcasm.

3 **“But I have intelligence as well as you; I am not inferior to you. And who does not know such things as these?”**

Speak of the believer’s priesthood.

Job jeered their alleged wisdom. He sarcastically responded to Zophar’s snidely calling him a stupid donkey (11:12) by saying that they thought they were so smart that when they would die all wisdom would be gone! [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 733]

Status does not determine intelligence. Or a right to truth. Not that Job’s friends had “status”, but they acted as if they were in the know.

This line translates a Hebrew idiom “I do not fall from you,” meaning “I do not fall short of you” or “I am not less than you.” NEB translates “In nothing do I fall short of you.” Job is assuring his friends that he is their equal. This line may also be rendered, for example, “I am equal to you” or “What you are in thinking I am also.” [Handbook on the Book of Job, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 231.]

This line, “I am not inferior to you,” recurs at 13:2b.

Perhaps with reference to Zophar’s proverb about the “hollow-headed man” who will never acquire “heart” (בבל (11:12), Job protests that he is a man of intelligence no less than they. [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 289]

“Not inferior” by litotes actually means “superior”; he is not just the friends’ equal in knowledge of conventional wisdom, but he by his own experience has gained a higher wisdom, a knowledge contrary to conventional theology, namely that a righteous man can be afflicted by God, and—as a corollary—the reverse of that, namely that the deeds of the wicked can go unrequited. [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 289]

That really means he thinks he is superior, and that is because he has by his experience gained a higher wisdom than theirs. He knows something they do not know: that it is possible for a righteous man to be afflicted and, equally, that the deeds of the wicked can go unpunished (4–6). [“Job,” in New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 469]

4 **“I am a joke to my friends, The one who called on God and He answered him; The just and blameless man is a joke.**

“Joke” used 2x refers to Job’s friends attitude toward him. What does Job mean by the fact that he called on God and was answered by Him?

These verses are a great difficulty, both in what they contain and in how they relate to their context. Many commentators (e.g., Siegfried, Duhm, Gray) regard them as misplaced or secondary. No one doubts that the words are suitable in Job’s mouth, but why should Job at this point complain that he is a “laughingstock” to his friends, and that “those who provoke God are secure”? The answer can only be that these lines present the reason why Job is “not inferior” in wisdom to his friends (v 2b). [David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 289]

Job has become a potential laughingstock, or object of derision, to his friends in that he has been smitten by God. The phrase need not mean that his friends—whether those of the dialogue or others of his acquaintance—have actually been deriding him, but that his affliction is a sign that he has been humiliated by God and is therefore fair game for the taunts of the pious. This nasty habit, as it appears to us, of laughing at the afflictions of others perhaps originates in a desire to disassociate oneself from the victim of a curse, divine or human; by taunting or mocking the sufferer one distances oneself from the disaster and thus protects oneself from its baleful influence. It is not, from this perspective, simply a heartless expression of self-righteous Schadenfreude to do so; the truly righteous can rightly laugh when calamity strikes the boastful wicked, saying, “See the man who would not make God his refuge but trusted in the abundance of his wealth” (Ps 52:9 [7]). The motif of laughing at the calamity of others is a frequent one in the OT, especially in psalmic and prophetic literature: e.g. Ps 31:12 [11]; 35:15; 69:11–13 [10–12] (“when I made sackcloth my clothing [as a symbol of distress or deprivation] I became a byword, a taunt”); Jer 20:7–8; Lam 1:7; 3:14; Job 30:1, 9. Usually it is enemies who are the deriders or taunters, but the sufferer’s complaint is especially poignant when—as here—it is his erstwhile friends or his relatives that have become his mockers; so e.g. Ps 55:13–14 [12–13]; 88:9 [8]; cf. also on 9:23. [Word Biblical Commentary]

We have had a glimpse of such a person, from the outside, in 1:5, where Job is pictured in constant petition to God on behalf of his children—petition that evidently met with favor on every day except that fateful day of the divine assembly. Here we are invited into that man’s experience of “calling” and “being answered” as a natural, unfretful, satisfying relation with the divine. But of course that was a former experience; now he is the man whom God has not answered and will not answer. Now Job is a caller without an answerer: “I cry to thee and thou dost not answer me ... thou hast turned cruel to me” (30:20–21). [Word Biblical Commentary]

Job the sufferer wishes God would answer his cries for help (cf. 14:15). But he is in the position of the godless man whose “cry” God does not “hear” (27:9). Cf. 19:16 and Psalm 10:1.

5 “He who is at ease holds calamity in contempt, As prepared for those whose feet slip.

It’s one thing to judge others who are suffering when you are not. Note those who think that what we’ve been thru is no big deal (“get over it already”). “Feet slip” i.e. slip into calamity.

6 “The tents of the destroyers prosper, And those who provoke God are secure, Whom God brings into their power.

Job may have in mind the marauders who plundered him. Cf. 1:15,17.

[P]rofessional plunderers (as שׁוֹרְטִים in 15:21; Jer 6:26; 12:2; 48:8; etc.), not “robbers” simply (RSV, NAB). Perhaps Job has in mind those marauders who have brought disaster to him (Sabeans and Chaldeans, 1:15, 17), though he does not know what fate may have befallen them, and cannot without guesswork affirm anything about their present state. David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 291]

Note the various translations of this difficult verse:

The tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure, who bring their god in their hand. [ESV]

The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure— those God has in his hand. [NIV]

To carry their god in their hands refers to those who carry their idols [gods] around in their hands—gods they or someone else made. Why do idolaters prosper when Job, a worshiper of God, suffers? [BKC]

Who bring their god in their hand: this line is literally “whom ’eloah brings in his hand.” Numerous attempts have been made to understand these words. Leaving aside all the proposed emendations or changes in the Hebrew vowels to make it clearer, there are two major approaches. The first is that of Gordis, who asserts that it is a Hebrew idiom which means to deceive; and he translates “all those who have deceived him (God).” However, Gordis gives no evidence of such an idiom used elsewhere in the Bible. The second interpretation is based on similar language used in Genesis 32:29; Deuteronomy 28:32; Micah 2:1. Each of these passages contains the term ‘el, which is taken by Dhorme to refer to God, and he translates these passages respectively “Their hand serves as their God,” “My hand serves me as God,” and “Your hand will not be able to serve as God.”

As is seen in RSV and TEV, ’eloah is here an object under the control or power of the thieves and godless people in line a and is appropriately translated “god.” The best sense that can be made is that some people think they control or have power over God, but in reality they have only a god, idol, false god in their hand or power.

TEV translates as a concessive clause “though their only god is their own strength.” We may also say, for example, “They are the ones who have power over their gods” or “Their strength is the god they trust.” In languages in which it is difficult to express the idea of a “god,” we may say, for example, “What they worship is their own power” or “Their own strength takes the place of God.” [A Handbook on the Book of Job, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 234]

The next line has caused much debate. The commonest view, represented by RSV “who bring their god in their hand,” understands it as further descriptive of the wicked. Perhaps they are idolators who carry about their gods with them (Doederlein, Andersen), or else their god is, metaphorically speaking, their own hands (cf. JB “make a god of their two fists”). There are similar, but not identical, expressions in Mic 2:1 and Gen 31:29, which may mean “their hand serves as their god” and “my hand serves me as a god” (Dhorme), though many see here not אֱלֹהִים, “god,” but a separate word for “strength” (KB3. cf. BDB). [Word Biblical Commentary]

VERSES 12:7-12

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

7 “But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; And the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. 8 “Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; And let the fish of the sea declare to you. 9 “Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this, 10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind? 11 “Does not the ear test words, As the palate tastes its food? 12 “Wisdom is with aged men, With long life is understanding.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

7 “But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; 8 or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. 9 Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? 10 In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. 11 Does not the ear test words as the palate tastes food? 12 Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

7 But ask the animals, and they will instruct you; ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you. 8 Or speak to the earth, and it will instruct you; let the fish of the sea inform you. 9 Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? 10 The life of every living thing is in His hand, as well as the breath of all mankind. 11 Doesn't the ear test words as the palate tastes food? 12 Wisdom is found with the elderly, and understanding comes with long life.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

7 “But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; 8 or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. 9 Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? 10 In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. 11 Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food? 12 Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

B. God Has Given Wisdom to the Animals (12:7–12)

7–12 To many readers these verses have seemed decidedly out of place, so much so that they are omitted as later additions by Fohrer and Hesse among others. Superficially the connection of thought might seem to be: The wisdom of the friends, which they claim as their exclusive possession (so says Job in v 2, but he misrepresents them), is so commonplace that even the animals share it. But, as Gray writes, such a thought is strangely stated: “for Job’s charge is not that the friends lack the particular knowledge in

question, and need to be taught, which is the point emphasized in vv 7–8, but that they have no need to teach things so universally known, v 3c.” [Word Biblical Commentary]

Note that some scholars (cf. Word Biblical Commentary) see Job as quoting the thoughts of his friends. Cf.:

7–12 Here we do not have Job addressing the friends but Job ironically imagining what they might say to him. He says they have a very simplistic view of God’s ways of working; they think everything about sin and punishment is so straightforward that even the animals know it. It is the friends who speak the bland and obvious words of vs 10–11, and it is they who assert that wisdom is found among the aged (12). [David J. A. Clines, “Job,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 469]

7 “But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; And the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. 8 “Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; And let the fish of the sea declare to you.

Job is now addressing someone in the singular in vv. 7-8 (Zophar).

Again Job responded to Zophar’s comment about the son of a donkey (11:12) by telling him (you in 12:7–8 is sing.) he needed to learn from animals ... birds, even the earth, and fish. Job said that all of them were smarter than Zophar, knowing that calamities come from God’s hand (cf. 2:10), not necessarily from one’s sin. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 733–734]

So self-evident that even the animals know.... Sarcasm? “Earth” may refer to “plants” (vegetation). Apparently the Heb. word for plants occurs in some MSS (cf. UBS Handbook).

9 “Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this, 10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?

One wonders if Job is speaking in hyperbole — it seems obvious that the animal and plant creation has no ability to understand the workings of God. Other than that the creation testifies to the sovereignty of God (v. 10).

The word LORD (Yahweh, v. 9) occurs only here in the poetic discourses. Elsewhere in Job it occurs only in chapters 1–2; 38; 40; 42. Therefore some scholars say this occurrence in 12:9 is a later insertion. However, the name Lord is intentionally conspicuous here by its rare occurrence within the debates. In the Book of Job, this name for God is spoken only by Job (1:21; 12:9). All other instances are in prose narrative portions (in statements such as “The LORD said to Satan,” 1:7). In 1:21 Job acknowledged that calamities came from the Lord and in 12:9 he affirmed that same truth. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 734]

Note “nephesh” (life) vs. “ruach” (breath).

Daniel said it to Nebuchadnezzar when he urged the monarch to “acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (Dan 4:17, 25). Paul’s quotation from “some of your own poets” in Acts 17:28 is similar to this verse. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 151]

“That the hand of Yahweh has done this” is a rather enigmatic clause. The line occurs also in Isa 41:20 and is reminiscent too of Ps 109:27 and Jer. 14:22.

Yet. Job sees God’s sovereignty as capricious.

And why, we may ask, is Job cynical about such an attitude? Because what he has encountered is an untidy, arbitrary and cruel world order, in which the just person is a laughingstock (v 4), an order of affairs in which God is experienced not as some tidy-minded watchmaker but as the one who tears down, withholds, overthrows, deprives, despises, and destroys (vv 14–25). . . . “Yahweh’s hand has done this”; for Job raw experience, not mulled theology, is true wisdom. [Word Biblical Commentary]

11 **“Does not the ear test words, As the palate tastes its food?”**

The ear knows what is good or bad (cf. screeching sounds vs. music) as does the palate (bitter foods vs. sweet). The same saying will be used by Elihu in 34:3.

12 **“Wisdom is with aged men, With long life is understanding.”**

In the same way as v. 11, so v. 12 is true. Age should bring wisdom (cf. Proverbs / role and qualifications of an Elder). What is wisdom? Fear of the Lord is where it starts. A knowledge and right application of truth.

Note the words of Elihu in 32:7 - “I thought, ‘Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.’”

VERSES 12:13-25

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

13 “With Him are wisdom and might; To Him belong counsel and understanding. 14 “Behold, He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt; He imprisons a man, and there can be no release. 15 “Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up; And He sends them out, and they inundate the earth. 16 “With Him are strength and sound wisdom, The misled and the misleader belong to Him. 17 “He makes counselors walk barefoot And makes fools of judges. 18 “He loosens the bond of kings And binds their loins with a girdle. 19 “He makes priests walk barefoot And overthrows the secure ones. 20 “He deprives the trusted ones of speech And takes away the discernment of the elders. 21 “He pours contempt on nobles And loosens the belt of the strong. 22 “He reveals mysteries from the darkness And brings the deep darkness into light. 23 “He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away. 24 “He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth’s people And makes them wander in a pathless waste. 25 “They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

13 “With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding. 14 If he tears down, none can rebuild; if he shuts a man in, none can open. 15 If he withholds the waters, they dry up; if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land. 16 With him are strength and sound wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his. 17 He leads counselors away stripped, and judges he makes fools. 18 He looses the bonds of kings and binds a waistcloth on their hips. 19 He leads priests away stripped and overthrows the mighty. 20 He deprives of speech those who are trusted and takes away the discernment of the elders. 21 He pours contempt on princes and loosens the belt of the strong. 22 He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and brings deep darkness to light. 23 He makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away. 24 He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a trackless waste. 25 They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

13 Wisdom and strength belong to God; counsel and understanding are His. 14 Whatever He tears down cannot be rebuilt; whoever He imprisons cannot be released. 15 When He withholds the waters, everything dries up, and when He releases them, they destroy the land. 16 True wisdom and power belong to Him. The deceived and the deceiver are His. 17 He leads counselors away barefoot and makes judges go mad. 18 He releases the bonds put on by kings and fastens a belt around their waists. 19 He leads priests away barefoot and overthrows established leaders. 20 He deprives trusted advisers of speech and takes away the elders’ good judgment. 21 He pours out contempt on nobles and disarms the strong. 22 He reveals mysteries from the darkness and brings the deepest darkness into the light. 23 He makes nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges nations, then leads them away. 24 He deprives the world’s leaders of

reason, and makes them wander in a trackless wasteland. 25 They grope around in darkness without light; He makes them stagger like drunken men.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

13 “To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his. 14 What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; those he imprisons cannot be released. 15 If he holds back the waters, there is drought; if he lets them loose, they devastate the land. 16 To him belong strength and insight; both deceived and deceiver are his. 17 He leads rulers away stripped and makes fools of judges. 18 He takes off the shackles put on by kings and ties a loincloth around their waist. 19 He leads priests away stripped and overthrows officials long established. 20 He silences the lips of trusted advisers and takes away the discernment of elders. 21 He pours contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty. 22 He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings utter darkness into the light. 23 He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them. 24 He deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason; he makes them wander in a trackless waste. 25 They grope in darkness with no light; he makes them stagger like drunkards.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

C. God is the Divine Destroyer (12:13–25)

Verses 13–25 make up a hymn on God’s wisdom and power, with three recurrences of a single theme. [William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 240]

An intense overview of God’s absolute sovereignty!

verses 13–25 make up a hymn on God’s wisdom and power, with three recurrences of a single theme. [A Handbook on the Book of Job, UBS Handbook Series]

This hymn to the destructive power of the Almighty presents Job’s new wisdom (3). The God he has now experienced is no calm governor of a well-ordered universe, but an eccentric deity; he cannot be comprehended and he cannot be tamed. What is most characteristic of this God is his reversal of stable order. In other hymns (such as Eliphaz’s in 5:9–16) the purpose of such reversals is to bring salvation and to correct injustice. But here there is no moral or beneficial purpose in these upheavals performed by God. [David J. A. Clines, “Job,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 469]

13 “With Him are wisdom and might; To Him belong counsel and understanding.

Thus any commitment to autonomy is futile. Cf. Naturalism. Might = omnipotence. Cf. Isa. 28:29. “Counsel here does not mean giving advice but rather devising plans, thinking ahead, having insight.” [UBS Handbook]

14 “Behold, He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt; He imprisons a man, and there can be no release.

15 “Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up; And He sends them out, and they inundate the earth.

16 “With Him are strength and sound wisdom, The misled and the misleader belong to Him.

16a Bookends with v. 13.

“Deception is everywhere, and it is all under God’s control.” [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 153]

17 “He makes counselors walk barefoot And makes fools of judges.

“Counselors” - Job’s 3 friends? Barefoot may refer to times of grief. Judges, cf. 9:24. Or it may be akin to the practice of leading away captives barefoot (sometimes even naked).

18 “He loosens the bond of kings And binds their loins with a girdle.

Difficult verse. Cf. NIV (also HCSB):

He takes off the shackles put on by kings and ties a loincloth around their waist. [NIV]

He looses the bonds of kings: bonds translates the Hebrew “discipline, correction,” which most scholars read with different vowels to get bonds or “chains.” It is not certain if the meaning is that God removes the chains which kings put on others, or if God takes away some symbol of royal authority belonging to kings. HOTTTP understands it in the latter sense, as do TEV and others: “He dethrones kings.” SPCL has “He leaves kings without authority.” NIV represents the former sense, “He takes off the shackles put on by kings,” referring to the bonds kings put on people. Dhorme thinks the bonds of kings refers to chains which keep kings in bondage, so that the meaning is “He sets kings free from chains.”

The understanding of the first line is partly dependent upon the second, and binds a waistcloth on their loins. In RSV the relation between the two lines is not clear. The Hebrew says “and he binds a girdle on their waist.” Some take this to mean that he strengthens the kings by placing a girdle or wide band about their middle. However, it is more probable that the meaning is that God, having removed their symbol of authority, puts on the kings a waistcloth which is worn for doing hard physical labor, and so depicts a slave. TEV translates this entire line “and makes them prisoners.” A literal rendering of line b such as NIV, “and ties a loincloth around their waist,” would require an explanatory note to show that he reduces the king to a slave. It is better to give the fuller cultural significance in the text by saying, for example, “and makes them slaves” or “and ties a loincloth on them and makes them slaves.” Another translation model is “God takes

away the authority of kings and makes them like slaves.” If the translator wishes to keep the change of clothes image in each line, it may be possible to say, for example, “He takes away from kings their robes of authority and puts on them the loin cloth of a slave.” [UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 243]

The dissolution of royal power is a further sign of the chaos-creating power of God. The “bonds” (RSV) of kings are most probably not bonds but some regal garments (BHS) or the “belt” (JB) as symbol of authority (Gordis); the common view, that God loosens the bonds that kings have imposed on others (Gray, Rowley, NEB, NAB, NIV), is inappropriate to a depiction of the king’s own loss of power. [Word Biblical Commentary]

19 “He makes priests walk barefoot And overthrows the secure ones.

Only mention of “priests” in Job. On “barefoot” see above.

20 “He deprives the trusted ones of speech And takes away the discernment of the elders.

And takes away the discernment of the elders: discernment translates Hebrew “taste” and refers to the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. It is rendered in English by such words as “judgment, insight, good sense.” [UBS Handbook Series, 244]

21 “He pours contempt on nobles And loosens the belt of the strong.

22 “He reveals mysteries from the darkness And brings the deep darkness into light.

23 “He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.

24 “He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth’s people And makes them wander in a pathless waste.

Job returns to leaders (17-21).

“And makes them wander in a pathless waste” is identical to Psalm 107:40b.

25 “They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

Concurrence:

Concursus dei or concursus divinus (lat., Literally: divine concurrence) is a theological and philosophical teaching that divine activity runs parallel to the activity of people and things. ... "acts of God." According to concursus Dei, an event can be both simultaneously an act of nature, c.q. humans, and an act of God. [Wikipedia]

VERSES 13:1-5

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 “Behold, my eye has seen all this, My ear has heard and understood it. 2 “What you know I also know; I am not inferior to you. 3 “But I would speak to the Almighty, And I desire to argue with God. 4 “But you smear with lies; You are all worthless physicians. 5 “O that you would be completely silent, And that it would become your wisdom!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 “Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. 2 What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. 3 But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God. 4 As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all. 5 Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Look, my eyes have seen all this; my ears have heard and understood it. 2 Everything you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. 3 Yet I prefer to speak to the Almighty and argue my case before God. 4 But you coat the truth with lies; you are all worthless doctors. 5 If only you would shut up and let that be your wisdom!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 “My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it. 2 What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. 3 But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God. 4 You, however, smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you! 5 If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

D. Job’s Argument is with God (13:1–5)

13:1–3 This strophe both forms an inclusio with 12:2–3, and introduces a new direction in which the speech will move. In referring back to “all” that has just now been said, and especially in repeating the clause “I am not inferior to you” (= 12:3b), Job indicates that the subject of chap. 12 is now at a close: he has now completed his demonstration that his knowledge of God’s ways is superior to that of the friends. [Word Biblical Commentary]

1 “Behold, my eye has seen all this, My ear has heard and understood it. 2 “What you know I also know; I am not inferior to you.

Bookends the thought of v. 3.

Contrary to the impression given by most translations (as for example RSV, NEB), “What you know, I also know,” Job’s claim does not concern the quantity but the quality of his knowledge. The Hebrew is literally, “according to your knowledge I know,” that is, my understanding is qualitatively on a par with yours. For the issue is not facts but meaning: it is the question of what divine intention is revealed in the course of human affairs. On this score Job is not “inferior” to them—which is to say, his insight is actually superior to theirs. [Word Biblical Commentary]

Zophar asked Job in 11:7 “Can you find out the deep things of God?” To him God is beyond human knowing, but Job is not impressed with Zophar’s argument. [UBS Handbook Series]

3 “But I would speak to the Almighty, And I desire to argue with God.

In light of God’s sovereignty as expressed by Job in vv. 13-25, Job’s argument is with God not men. But why argue with God when He does as He pleases? This is the divine sovereignty / human responsibility debate. (cf. my struggles as it pertained to Giana—God was going to do what He was going to do!) But we interact with God in reality, not in dry theology. God may know all, He may do whatever He pleases, but He uses our prayers and hears our pleas. Cf. the concept of grieving the Holy Spirit as in the N.T.

What Job wants (he uses the quite strong word צפח, “to desire”; cf. 33:22) is to “argue” (היכרה) “with” (לִּאֵל) God. The preposition “with” indicates that the verb does mean not “reproach” or “reprove,” as it generally does when followed by a direct object or by the preposition לֵעָלְמָא, but “argue” a case. The language is thoroughly legal and formal, but, as in Israelite legal practice generally, the point of the legal process Job envisages here is not so much the winning of a dispute as the settlement of a disagreement. Its aim is reconciliation rather than victory (cf. Andersen); Job’s longing in 14:15 for a fully reciprocated relationship with God is momentarily foreshadowed. [Word Biblical Commentary]

4 “But you smear with lies; You are all worthless physicians. 5 “O that you would be completely silent, And that it would become your wisdom!

Whitewash with lies translates “plasterers of lies” and is similar to Psalm 119:69 “The godless besmear me with lies” (RSV). Whitewash is lime mixed with water and is used for painting on walls to make them white and cover ugly rough surfaces. (See Matt 23:27; Acts 23:3, “whitewashed tombs.”) Here the lies are the whitewash that conceals the truth. [UBS Handbook Series]

Silent, like they were when they first arrived! Wisdom suggested in Proverbs 17:28: “Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise.” “If he keeps quiet, even a fool is reckoned a wise man” (Prov 17:28; cf. also Eccles 20:5–6).

The three were not the ones he wanted to debate. He wanted to argue (yākah, “dispute, debate in court”) his case with God. But that was future, as we saw in chapters 9 & 10.

VERSES 13:6-12

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

6 “Please hear my argument And listen to the contentions of my lips. 7 “Will you speak what is unjust for God, And speak what is deceitful for Him? 8 “Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? 9 “Will it be well when He examines you? Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man? 10 “He will surely reprove you If you secretly show partiality. 11 “Will not His majesty terrify you, And the dread of Him fall on you? 12 “Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, Your defenses are defenses of clay.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

6 Hear now my argument and listen to the pleadings of my lips. 7 Will you speak falsely for God and speak deceitfully for him? 8 Will you show partiality toward him? Will you plead the case for God? 9 Will it be well with you when he searches you out? Or can you deceive him, as one deceives a man? 10 He will surely rebuke you if in secret you show partiality. 11 Will not his majesty terrify you, and the dread of him fall upon you? 12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

6 Hear now my argument, and listen to my defense. 7 Would you testify unjustly on God’s behalf or speak deceitfully for Him? 8 Would you show partiality to Him or argue the case in His defense? 9 Would it go well if He examined you? Could you deceive Him as you would deceive a man? 10 Surely He would rebuke you if you secretly showed partiality. 11 Would God’s majesty not terrify you? Would His dread not fall on you? 12 Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ash; your defenses are made of clay.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

6 Hear now my argument; listen to the pleas of my lips. 7 Will you speak wickedly on God’s behalf? Will you speak deceitfully for him? 8 Will you show him partiality? Will you argue the case for God? 9 Would it turn out well if he examined you? Could you deceive him as you might deceive a mortal? 10 He would surely call you to account if you secretly showed partiality. 11 Would not his splendor terrify you? Would not the dread of him fall on you? 12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

E. Job Questions the Friends’ Worth As Witnesses Against Him (13:6–12)

Job asks a series of 4 questions.

6 **“Please hear my argument And listen to the contentions of my lips.**

7 “Will you speak what is unjust for God, And speak what is deceitful for Him?”

Speak falsely is literally “speak injustice.” In 6:29 the same noun is translated “wrong.” In 27:4 it is translated “falsehood” and is parallel with “deceit.” UBS Handbook]

These next three verses consist of six rhetorical questions that Job put to his friends. In the first two Job added adverbs, “wickedly” and “deceitfully.” It was enough that they presumed to speak for God, but to represent him with evil and deceit was compounding their arrogance. Job correctly believed that it was wrong to use lies and false reasoning even in the service of truth. [New American Commentary]

Job does not ask whether the friends are speaking lies. He assumes they are, because they stand opposed to his experience of the truth. What he asks, in astonishment, is whether they think they are doing God a service by uttering lies on his behalf. Surely God, even though he is in the wrong (in Job’s opinion), would wish himself defended according to the rules of fair argument. [Word Biblical Commentary]

8 “Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God?”

Will you show partiality toward him: show partiality toward him translates “lift up his face.” This is an idiom referring to the act of a superior to an inferior that allows the inferior person to face the superior after having been granted a special favor. In other words Job is asking if his friends will do God a special favor that will allow God to look up at them. The tone is very sarcastic. In some languages the first clause may be expressed figuratively; for example, “Will you hold out your right hand to God?” “Will you put your right hand on God’s head?” or “Will you make God’s face shine?” [UBS Handbook Series]

Job is asking if God has secured their services to defend (and represent) Him!

The Hebrew “controversy” (rîb) can be any quarrel in everyday life (e.g., Exod 21:18), or, more specifically, the exchange of arguments engaged in by legal opponents in private before their case comes to public adjudication (e.g., Gen 31:36), or, most formally, the lawsuit itself in which plaintiff and defendant argue their case in the hearing of a “reprover” (môkîah) or judge. Throughout most of the book, Job envisages himself in the “pre-trial” phase of his conflict with God. [Word Biblical Commentary]

9 “Will it be well when He examines you? Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man?”

10 “He will surely reprove you If you secretly show partiality.”

After these three questions Job now makes a statement in verse 10a followed by a condition in verse 10b.

The irony is that, at the end of the day, it will be Job who is in the right and the friends who are in the wrong; the divine wrath will be kindled against them because they have not spoken of God what is right (42:7). [Word Biblical Commentary]

11 **“Will not His majesty terrify you, And the dread of Him fall on you?”**

For the fourth time Job addresses his friends with a question: Will not his majesty terrify you? Rowley suggests that in Hebrew the word translated his majesty is literally “lifting up,” and “show partiality” in 10b is literally “lift up the face.” Consequently his majesty forms a play on words, and so Job is saying that, if the friends lift up the face of God, his lifting up will cause them terror. On the other hand a person who enjoys high status or elevated rank is said in Hebrew to be “lifted up.” A high standing authority evokes “respect, fear, awe.” In this sense majesty is a good rendering. This line may also be expressed, for example, “Won’t his greatness terrify you?” “Won’t his being like a chief scare you?” or as a statement, “He will frighten you because he is so great and powerful.” [UBS Handbook Series]

The “fear” (יִרְאָה) of God, that is, the numinous terror his coming inspires, is frequently connected with his visitation, as judge, upon wrongdoers (Isa 2:10, 19, 21; Jer 49:5; Ps 119:120; cf. 36:2 [1]) or his enemies (Exod 15:16; Gen 35:5).

12 **“Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, Your defenses are defenses of clay.”**

Certainly they could not be God’s defense attorneys (argue the case for translates *riḇ*, a legal term, “to bring a court litigation”). In fact if God scrutinized their lives, they could not possibly deceive Him. He would ... rebuke (from *yākaḥ*, the word for “argue” in v. 3 and related to “argument” in v. 6) them and terrify (*bā’at*; also in 7:14; 9:34; 13:21) them. Later they actually were reproved by God, when He convicted them of the errors of their views (42:7–9).

These men were incompetent to counsel, for their words were proverbs of ashes, a fitting description in view of the pile of ashes where Job was sitting (2:8). Their arguments, behind which they hid like fortresses made of weak clay, failed to help Job. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 734]

Your defenses are defenses of clay: defenses translates a Hebrew word referring to the rounded ornamental knob on a shield. By extension it may also refer to the shield itself and also to the function of a shield, that is, “defense.” Here your defenses refers to the words of Job’s friends, what they say to Job. And, as in the previous line, Job considers them to be as fragile as clay. A shield made of clay would break in pieces at the first blow. TEV translates defenses as “arguments” which crumble like “clay.” The line may be rendered, for example, “The words you use to defend yourselves are as weak as clay” or “Your arguments are no better than a shield made of clay.” [UBS Handbook Series]

“Your maxims” (zīkrōnêkem) is from the root meaning “remember” and might be translated “reminders.”³⁷ One can almost picture Job grasping a handful of ashes from where he was sitting as he spoke these words and letting them sift through his fingers (2:8). Then he might have picked up a potsherd and broken it as he spoke the second line. Several commentators and translations render gab not as “defenses” but “replies/answers.”³⁸ It fits better with the parallelism but rests on cognates in Aramaic and Arabic. [New American Commentary]

VERSES 13:13-16

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

13 “Be silent before me so that I may speak; Then let come on me what may. 14 “Why should I take my flesh in my teeth And put my life in my hands? 15 “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. 16 “This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

13 “Let me have silence, and I will speak, and let come on me what may. 14 Why should I take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in my hand? 15 Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face. 16 This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

13 Be quiet, and I will speak. Let whatever comes happen to me. 14 Why do I put myself at risk and take my life in my own hands? 15 Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him. I will still defend my ways before Him. 16 Yes, this will result in my deliverance, for no godless person can appear before Him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

13 “Keep silent and let me speak; then let come to me what may. 14 Why do I put myself in jeopardy and take my life in my hands? 15 Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. 16 Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless person would dare come before him!

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

F. Job Will Argue His Case Face to Face with God (13:13–16)

Couched in the middle of this section is one of the high points of Job’s speeches. But not all agree, and v. 15 has provoked more emendations and alternate translations than almost any verse in the book. Following the NIV text rather than the footnote,³⁹ I understand v. 15 and this pericope to be a positive affirmation of our hero’s faith. Framing the section are words directed to the friends to listen (v. 13) unless they have verifiable accusations to bring (v. 19). [New American Commentary]

13 “Be silent before me so that I may speak; Then let come on me what may.

And let come on me what may: this line in Hebrew ends with “what,” but the meaning is to be taken as “come what may,” “let be what will be.” So Job is saying he is ready to pay the price for whatever may happen to him for speaking out. The line may be expressed “it

is unimportant what happens to me,” “let happen whatever will happen,” or “I don’t care what may happen to me.” [UBS Handbook Series]

14 “Why should I take my flesh in my teeth And put my life in my hands?”

Flesh in this line can best be equated with life in the next line. This parallelism is the reverse of the more common occurrence of the figurative element in the second line. My flesh and my life refer to Job’s life. Together the two lines say “I will risk my life.” See Judges 12:3; 1 Samuel 19:5 for the same expression. [UBS Handbook Series]

“Take my life in my hands” is an idiom common to Hebrew and English, but “put myself in jeopardy” translates the idiom “put my flesh in my teeth.” The NEB translates it “put my neck in the noose.” The NEB has “expose myself to danger” (cf. NCV).⁴² The answer to Job’s question is that he was convinced he was innocent. He was not afraid to meet God or be tried before him. He would rather die proclaiming his innocence than live under the assumed verdict of guilt. [New American Commentary]

To put one’s life in one’s hand is obviously a risky business: human hands are not safe places for the long-term protection of precious objects! Taking one’s flesh in one’s teeth, the first proverbial expression, must have an identical meaning, “flesh” parallel to “life” and “teeth” parallel to “hands.” Though teeth can hold small objects quite satisfactorily for a short time, they are incapable of holding anything large for any length of time. We may note that though “flesh” (body) and “life” (life-principle, soul) are usually distinguished from one another, it is obviously permissible, as in our text, that each should refer to the whole person and so can have the same significance and stand in parallel (cf. 14:22; Ps 63:2 [1]; 84:3 [2]; cf. N. P. Bratsiotis, TDOT 2:325–26).

Other interpretations of the proverbs are numerous. Dhorme envisages Job carrying off his flesh in his teeth as a wild animal, especially when threatened (cf. Schlottmann, Dillmann), makes off with its prey (cf. 27:17 “I tore the prey from his teeth”; Jer 38:2 “you shall have your life as booty”). Rowley thinks of an animal that fights with flesh in its mouth and so risks losing it. Bittenwieser compared an Arabic saying, “he escaped with his life between his jaws,” which seems more to the point. N. Herz thought that the idiom meant to take extra care of one’s life (“Egyptian Words and Idioms in the Book of Job,” OLZ [1913] 343–36 [344–45]; “The Exaggeration of Errors in the Massoretic,” JTS 15 [1914] 258–64 [263]), the first colon meaning the same, since animals “carry off their prey in their teeth for fear of another animal taking it from them”; but it is hard to see how this can yield the meaning, “Why should I take extra care of my body and soul? I do not mind risking them.” Not even if these images signify that Job is running a great risk will they be appropriate, for his point is not that he will take care of himself although he runs a risk, but that he will indeed recklessly risk his neck. Rashi took it to mean that Job would force himself to be silent, which is inappropriate (similarly Tur-Sinai: “Why should I hold my tongue with my teeth?”). Most improbable is the suggestion of A.M. Habermann, “The Tomb of Rachel and the Term שפן [Heb.],” Tarb 25 (1956) 363–68,

that a pagan practice is alluded to of taking sacred objects, e.g., the limbs of the dead, with one's hand in order to acquire strength from them. Nor does there seem to be any connection with the idiom "the skin of the teeth" in 19:20. [David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 311–312]

15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

13:15 is a famous verse that may be taken in one of two ways: (1) According to the KJV and NIV we should translate it, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him." In other words, no matter what happens to me, I still remain confident that God will vindicate me. (2) Or it may be, "Behold, He will slay me; I have no hope." Thus Job anticipated that his self-defense would result in his being killed by God. But he intends to go ahead anyway, firmly persuaded of his innocence. [Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 12:1–12]

Note that UBS takes a different take on this verse (15a) than what is generally accepted:

Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope: KJV translates "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" and so pictures Job as a man of unconquerable trust in God. However, this rendering is wrong. The context is that of challenging God to do his worst to Job. . . . The line may also be expressed, for example, "Let God kill me if he wishes, what more do I have to lose?" [UBS Handbook Series]

Robert L. Alden takes the "traditional" approach:

The crux of the problem is the word *lō'* ("not") in the first line of the Masoretic Text. These same Masoretes had an alternate tradition, however, to read it *lō* ("to/for/in him"; reflected in the MT margin). The former produces a text with a sense of hopelessness on Job's part.⁴³ The latter makes this one of the few positive statements of faith from the lips of our hero, in line with 1:21 and 2:10.⁴⁴ John Calvin attempted to retain both the written text and the confidence of Job by turning the line into a rhetorical question, "Shall I not hope?"⁴⁵ M. Dahood suggested that *lō'* could be an asseverative, "surely."⁴⁶ The verb *yhl* ("hope") is read as "hesitate" by the NEB,⁴⁷ "quaver" by AB, and "be quiet" by Gordis.⁴⁸ In the end it is the context that shapes the translator's choice, and I tilt toward the traditional rendering of the KJV and NIV on the basis of vv. 15b, 16a, and especially v. 18b. [New American Commentary]

Cf. the RSV: "Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope; yet I will defend my ways to his face."

For grammatical considerations and options, see David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 312–13.

Note:

However that first verb should be translated, there is a strong case to be made for taking this line as an expression of Job's hopelessness. The traditional translation of AV,

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” must regretfully be set aside as out of harmony with the context. As Peake says, “It is very beautiful in itself, and no doubt what Job ought to have said, and what he would have said after the vision of God. But it is singularly unfortunate, since it is one of the few widely known fragments in the poem and has thus created an entirely false impression as to Job’s real attitude.” Job does not have much faith in God, compared with his faith in himself; but how could a person so obsessed with God be called in the least irreligious? For Job, faith is not a matter of whether he believes in God, but of whether God believes in him. [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 313]

But note 6:10: “But it is still my consolation, And I rejoice in unsparing pain, That I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

One also has to ask why so many good English translations render this verse in the “traditional sense.” Cf.

ESV Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face.

NASB95 “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

NCV Even if God kills me, I have hope in him; I will still defend my ways to his face.

NIV Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face.

AV Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

HCSB Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him. I will still defend my ways before Him.

“argue” or “defend” = Hebrew *’okiach* which is related (verbal form) to the word (noun) “umpire” in 9:34. Job feels that he needs to be his own defender.

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate (*παράκλητος*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Introduction to sermon idea as it relates to ‘we may not know, but we know we may trust.’ — times I felt jilted by God in praying for a) Jacob sit.; b) Giana recovery . . .

16 “This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence.

Job’s desire to come before God as a righteous man will deliver him. Back to the question of 1:9.

Salvation = deliverance. Not eschatological salvation (justification) which was not in Job’s view. Job does not view himself as Godless, therefore, he has hope he may enter God’s presence (his “salvation”).

“Deliverance” translates yěšûâ, elsewhere rendered “salvation” (Exod 15:2 and over sixty times in Psalms and Isaiah; it is the Hebrew equivalent of the name “Jesus”). Paul may have had this verse in mind when he penned Phil 1:19. [New American Commentary]

I would disagree with Clines here:

What he needs “salvation” from is self-doubt, loss of confidence in the rightness of his cause. Now what will preserve or “save” him from such doubt is the very course on which he is embarked, approaching God. [Word Biblical Commentary, 314]

Paul may borrow from Job’s thought in Philippians 1:19 -

for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

VERSES 13:17-23

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

17 “Listen carefully to my speech, And let my declaration fill your ears. 18 “Behold now, I have prepared my case; I know that I will be vindicated. 19 “Who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die. 20 “Only two things do not do to me, Then I will not hide from Your face: 21 Remove Your hand from me, And let not the dread of You terrify me. 22 “Then call, and I will answer; Or let me speak, then reply to me. 23 “How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

17 Keep listening to my words, and let my declaration be in your ears. 18 Behold, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right. 19 Who is there who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die. 20 Only grant me two things, then I will not hide myself from your face: 21 withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me. 22 Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and you reply to me. 23 How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

17 Pay close attention to my words; let my declaration ring in your ears. 18 Now then, I have prepared my case; I know that I am right. 19 Can anyone indict me? If so, I will be silent and die. 20 Only grant these two things to me, God, so that I will not have to hide from Your presence: 21 remove Your hand from me, and do not let Your terror frighten me. 22 Then call, and I will answer, or I will speak, and You can respond to me. 23 How many iniquities and sins have I committed? Reveal to me my transgression and sin.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

17 Listen carefully to what I say; let my words ring in your ears. 18 Now that I have prepared my case, I know I will be vindicated. 19 Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die. 20 “Only grant me these two things, God, and then I will not hide from you: 21 Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors. 22 Then summon me and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply to me. 23 How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

G. Job Calls on God to Appear in Court with Him (13:17–23)

17 “Listen carefully to my speech, And let my declaration fill your ears.

For the third time in this chapter, Job emphasizes his message by calling for attention. Listen carefully to my words: Job's call for a hearing is in the prophetic style of Isaiah 6:9, which is literally a double verb, "Hear and hear." The same formula will be repeated by Job again in 21:2 and by Elihu in 37:2. [UBS Handbook Series]

18 "Behold now, I have prepared my case; I know that I will be vindicated.

I know that I shall be vindicated: vindicated translates the word used in 9:15 ("innocent"); 11:2 and means "to be right, innocent of wrong, not guilty." The line may also be expressed, for example, "I know that God will declare me innocent of wrongdoing" or "I know that God will say to me, 'Job, you are not guilty.'" [UBS Handbook Series]

To this verse Elihu will allude in 34:5 when he quotes Job (cf. 32:2; 40:8).

Although the verb קָדַשׁ in a legal context can mean "be justified, be acquitted" (so 9:2; 11:2; 40:8), the context makes it clear that Job is expressing, not a hope of acquittal (cf. v 15b), but his conviction of innocence (v 15a). It is not being said that "if he can finally bring his case to court God will acquit him" (Habel). It is a matter of actually being in the right to start with (as RV, NAB, JB) rather than being vindicated or acquitted in the end (RSV, NEB, NJPS, NIV). [Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 315]

19 "Who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die.

20 "Only two things do not do to me, Then I will not hide from Your face: 21 Remove Your hand from me, And let not the dread of You terrify me.

Note "two things."

It is surely significant that after this speech, in which God is constantly addressed (there are 39 grammatical markers of the address to God; cf. on 10:1–22) Job never again directs a word to God until his closing speech, and there only briefly (30:20–23), and of course in his responses to God (40:4–5; 42:1–6). He will cry that the judge is inaccessible (23:3), but he will not speak to him again. This can only mean that 13:20–14:22 says all he wants to. However unprepossessing, this speech is Job's formal legal plea. [Word Biblical Commentary]

The NASB seems to imply that Job wants God to keep His hand upon him (judgment). Note other versions that remove this ambiguity:

ESV Only grant me two things, then I will not hide myself from your face: withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me.

NCV "God, please just give me these two things, and then I will not hide from you: Take your punishment away from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors.

NIV "Only grant me these two things, God, and then I will not hide from you: Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors.

HCSB Only grant these two things to me, God, so that I will not have to hide from Your presence: remove Your hand from me, and do not let Your terror frighten me.

440 I. אֵל (ʿāl): adv. of negation [see also 440.5]; ≡ Str 408; TWOT 90—LN 69.2–69.6 not, i.e., a marker that negates a statement (Ge 13:8), note: for NIV text in 1Sa 27:10, see 625; note: for NIV text in Job 13:20, see 446

אֵל (ʿāl): p. [served by 440]; ≡ Str 408; TWOT 90—LN 92.11–92.25 nothing, none, i.e., a negative reference to an entity, event, or state (Job 24:25; Jer 50:2) [James Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997)]

22 “Then call, and I will answer; Or let me speak, then reply to me.

9:16 “If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice.

In 9:16 things were different, we may note; for there Job doubted that, even if God were to reply to any summons issued by Job, God would take any notice of arguments and complaints advanced by Job. There is a contradiction here, but only between what Job preaches and what he practises. He doubts that God is listening to him but he goes on speaking, he mistrusts God’s disposition toward him but he goes on opening himself up before God nevertheless. This is a thoroughly human and admirable attitude, even if it is strictly speaking illogical. [Word Biblical Commentary]

23 “How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin.

The answer depends upon whether the Hebrew means, “How many sins have I committed?,” or “How many sins are laid to my charge?” If it is the former, it is a rhetorical question; if the latter, he is asking for an itemized bill of particulars, which may contain many items, all of them false charges. One thing we may be certain of is that, in asking “how many are the iniquities and sins that are mine?,” Job does not for a moment admit to any wrongdoing. As against Gray (“Job, though ‘perfect,’ does not deny that he has sinned”), Gordis (“Job does not pretend to be free from all guilt”) and Andersen (“Job never pretends that he is sinless”), I argue that it is essential to realize that his case is that he is completely innocent, in accord with the view of the narrative prologue in 1:1, 8. [Word Biblical Commentary]

13:20–28. Having stated his readiness to present his own self-defense at the risk of God’s striking him dead, Job then turned to God with his argumentation. But first he requested that God not intimidate him (cf. terror[s] in 9:34; 18:11), the defendant, in court. It was only right that he be given a fair trial (cf. 9:16–19). Then Job offered to meet God as either defendant or plaintiff. But when he asked God to enumerate his sins (cf. 6:24), God did not appear in court. Job asked God why He remained silent and considered Job His enemy (cf. 19:11; 33:10). To torment a ... leaf or chase after ... chaff was to molest the

worthless, to hit a frail, helpless person who was down. Why, Job wondered, should God conjure up past sins of his adolescence and punish him for them? There was no sin at the present that deserved such terrible affliction. Why would God treat him like a prisoner, watching him closely (cf. 7:19–20; 10:14; 31:4) and marking his feet so He could trace Job's steps?

After this sudden dash of daring, Job quickly subsided into a feeling of despair, continuing to pine away like a rotten moth-eaten garment. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 735]

Rabbi Levi Isaac ben Meir of Berdichev said, "What I want to know is not why I suffer, but whether I suffer for Thy sake." [In Leo Rosten's Treasury of Jewish Quotations (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 498]

Any theology that does not have room for Job's experience, that of a righteous man who is suffering, is a lie, and it is shocking that lies should be spoken about God. [David J. A. Clines, "Job," in New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 469]

VERSES 13:24-28

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

24 “Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy? 25 “Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble? Or will You pursue the dry chaff? 26 “For You write bitter things against me And make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth. 27 “You put my feet in the stocks And watch all my paths; You set a limit for the soles of my feet, 28 While I am decaying like a rotten thing, Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

24 Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy? 25 Will you frighten a driven leaf and pursue dry chaff? 26 For you write bitter things against me and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. 27 You put my feet in the stocks and watch all my paths; you set a limit for the soles of my feet. 28 Man wastes away like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

24 Why do You hide Your face and consider me Your enemy? 25 Will You frighten a wind-driven leaf? Will You chase after dry straw? 26 For You record bitter accusations against me and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. 27 You put my feet in the stocks and stand watch over all my paths, setting a limit for the soles of my feet. 28 Man wears out like something rotten, like a moth-eaten garment.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

24 Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy? 25 Will you torment a windblown leaf? Will you chase after dry chaff? 26 For you write down bitter things against me and make me reap the sins of my youth. 27 You fasten my feet in shackles; you keep close watch on all my paths by putting marks on the soles of my feet. 28 “So man wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

H. Job Complains Again Against God (13:24–28)

24 “Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy? 25 “Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble? Or will You pursue the dry chaff?

FRCL translates verse 25 “Whom are you pursuing?—A flying leaf! Whom do you ceaselessly chase?—A bit of dry straw!” This verse may also be rendered, for example, “Why do you frighten me and make me like a dry leaf blown from a tree, and chase me like straw blown by the wind?” [UBS Handbook Series]

26 “For You write bitter things against me And make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth.

26a Job likens G. to a judge writing down charges against him.

27 “You put my feet in the stocks And watch all my paths; You set a limit for the soles of my feet,

27b: ==> Some understand the meaning then to be that God engraves a mark on the soles of the feet, perhaps to track down the prisoner who might escape. Others take it to mean that God marks a line around Job’s feet, draws a circle, and does not allow him to move out of it. Still further, Dhorme understands the word to mean “examine,” and this is followed by TEV and others, and is a recommended model for translators. The line may also be expressed, for example, “You examine the ground my feet have touched,” “You inspect my footprints,” or “You study the footprints I make in the dust.” [UBS Handbook Series]

On 27c:

The last colon is literally “you engrave a mark on the roots of my feet.” קקק is a rarely used byform of קקק “cut in, inscribe,” the hithpael signifying here “inscribe for yourself” (GKC, § 54f). This is taken by many to be a reference to a supposed custom of the slave-owner branding his name upon the soles of his slave’s feet (NEB “setting a slave-mark on the arches of his feet”; similarly NIV, KB3, Tur-Sinai, Pope, Gordis, de Wilde; the interpretation goes back to J. A. Dathe). But the only evidence we have of slave-branding is upon the hand (Isa 44:5; 49:16) and the forehead, and it seems rather foolish to put such a brand in so inconspicuous a place. Tur-Sinai’s explanation is unbelievable: “the master’s name [was] inscribed on the sole of the foot in such a way that the mark of the inscription was left by the footsteps of the fugitive slave, so that he could be traced by them.” And the two photographs reproduced by Tur-Sinai from E. Ben-Dor, QDAP 18 (1947) pl. 27, showing the name of the owner (is it?) on jar handles, enclosed in a cartouche in the shape of a foot sole (is it?), are too remote from the practice of slavery to have any probative value. [Word Biblical Commentary]

28 While I am decaying like a rotten thing, Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

Languishing...

VERSES 14:1-6

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 “Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. 2 “Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain. 3 “You also open Your eyes on him And bring him into judgment with Yourself. 4 “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one! 5 “Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass. 6 “Turn Your gaze from him that he may rest, Until he fulfills his day like a hired man.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. 2 He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not. 3 And do you open your eyes on such a one and bring me into judgment with you? 4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one. 5 Since his days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass, 6 look away from him and leave him alone, that he may enjoy, like a hired hand, his day.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Man born of woman is short of days and full of trouble. 2 He blossoms like a flower, then withers; he flees like a shadow and does not last. 3 Do You really take notice of one like this? Will You bring me into judgment against You? 4 Who can produce something pure from what is impure? No one! 5 Since man’s days are determined and the number of his months depends on You, and since You have set limits he cannot pass, 6 look away from him and let him rest so that he can enjoy his day like a hired hand.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 “Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble. 2 They spring up like flowers and wither away; like fleeting shadows, they do not endure. 3 Do you fix your eye on them? Will you bring them before you for judgment? 4 Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one! 5 A person’s days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed. 6 So look away from him and let him alone, till he has put in his time like a hired laborer.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

I. Job Describes the Briefness of Life (14:1–6)

In chapter 13 Job spoke of his personal struggle to confront God, but in chapter 14 he speaks of the experience of people generally. The general theme is a lament for the short span of human life coupled with the finality of death. This chapter consists of two major divisions. The first is verses 1–6, and the second is verses 7–22. [UBS Handbook]

It is also possible to view chapter 14 as three discourses on despair alternating with two on hope. In verses 1–6 Job speaks of the inevitability of death for everyone. In verses 7–9 he looks to nature and sees hope for the tree stump that it may sprout again. In verses 10–12 his mood again switches to despair as he compares man’s death to a dried-up lake. In verses 13–17 he again regains hope, thinking how God could hide him in Sheol until God’s anger is past and God would call him. But in verses 18–22 he switches back to lament that God destroys a man’s hope. This scheme may be diagrammed:

Despair

1–6 God has made men weak and short of life.

Hope

7–9 A tree stump can sprout again.

Despair

10–12 Man dies like a lake or river that has dried up.

Hope

13–17 God could preserve Job in Sheol until his anger is past.

Despair

18–22 God destroys man’s hope to live.

[UBS Handbook Series]

All the wisdom literature touches on the theme that life is brief: Job in 7:6, Bildad in 8:9, Moses in Ps 90:10, David in 1 Chr 29:15, Qoheleth in Eccl 6:12, Solomon in Prov 10:27b, Isaiah in 40:7, and James in 4:14. Without the hope that the fuller perspective of the New Testament provides, such a passage as this is dreary, dismal, and depressing. [New American Commentary]

1 **“Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil.**

Word “man” translates Hebrew *’aDam* and refers to humankind, or everyone.

Jacob complained in Genesis 47:9 that his long life was brief. Job complained of the shortness of life in 7:6–7; 9:25–26. The third quality of life is that it is full of troubles. In 3:17 Job said that in Sheol “the wicked cease from troubling,” meaning they have ceased from doing evil. [UBS Handbook Series]

In a sudden shift of mood, Job turned from confidence that he could win his court case against God to a melancholy lament about life’s futility and death’s certainty. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 735]

Our days are too few and our troubles too many! Cf. 7:1-3.

2 **“Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.**

Man's few days are troublesome (the Heb. for trouble—the same word *rōgez* rendered “turmoil” in 3:17, 26—means agitation), and brief (cf. 7:6, 9; 9:25–26; 10:20; 14:5; 17:1) like a withering flower and fading shadow (cf. 8:9; Ecc. 6:12), constantly under God's scrutiny (cf. Job 7:20), and basically impure (cf. 9:30–31; 25:4). [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 735]

Brevity of life. Cf. conveyor belt illustration.

Psalm 90:5–6 5 You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. 6 In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; Toward evening it fades and withers away.

See also Psalm 103:15; 144:4; Isaiah 40:6–8.

The second line is parallel to the first, he flees like a shadow, and continues not. The image is that of silent and sudden disappearance. In 9:25 Job said “My days are swifter than a runner; they flee away....” The same verb translated flee is also used here. Psalm 144:4 says “Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow.” In this verse it is the person who is pictured as rushing past like a shadow. [UBS Handbook Series]

Cf. Giana only 14. Reid F. exhorting those at her memorial service (“she was only 14 years old”). Gospel.

Shadow = picture a sundial. The passing of minutes into hours into days.

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).

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. [Word Biblical Commentary]

3 “You also open Your eyes on him And bring him into judgment with Yourself.

4 “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!

This thought is held to be Job's paraphrase of Eliphaz's question in 4:17, “Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his maker?”

Total depravity! [T]he fallenness of the race, inherited sin, and associated doctrines all relate to this simple verse (cf. 15:14; 25:4; Pss 14:1b; 51:5 [7]; John 3:6; Rom 5:12).

Interesting that Clines disavows depravity as being in mind here:

Job has no concept of “original” or inherited sin (against W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* [Tr. J. A. Baker; London: SCM, 1967] 2:410, and the church fathers generally, who cited this verse—more frequently than any other in Job—in support of the Christian dogma . . . [Word Biblical Commentary])

5 “Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass.

Ravi Zacharias: “I will not live a day longer than God has determined.” Cf, he was born: March 26, 1946, Chennai, India (by God’s appointment) and died May 19, 2020, Atlanta, GA (by God’s appointment).

6 “Turn Your gaze from him that he may rest, Until he fulfills his day like a hired man.

Note the 3d person.

That he may enjoy, like a hireling, his day: in 7:1 Job spoke of the hard days of work of the hireling, a workman who is paid at the end of his day’s work. The hireling has only the short evening after his labor to enjoy himself. At that time he can take pleasure from what he has earned and from his rest. [UBS Handbook]

VERSES 14:7-22

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

7 “For there is hope for a tree, When it is cut down, that it will sprout again, And its shoots will not fail. 8 “Though its roots grow old in the ground And its stump dies in the dry soil, 9 At the scent of water it will flourish And put forth sprigs like a plant. 10 “But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he? 11 “As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up, 12 So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep. 13 “Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, That You would set a limit for me and remember me! 14 “If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my change comes. 15 “You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands. 16 “For now You number my steps, You do not observe my sin. 17 “My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And You wrap up my iniquity. 18 “But the falling mountain crumbles away, And the rock moves from its place; 19 Water wears away stones, Its torrents wash away the dust of the earth; So You destroy man’s hope. 20 “You forever overpower him and he departs; You change his appearance and send him away. 21 “His sons achieve honor, but he does not know it; Or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive it. 22 “But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

7 “For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. 8 Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the soil, 9 yet at the scent of water it will bud and put out branches like a young plant. 10 But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he? 11 As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, 12 so a man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep. 13 Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! 14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come. 15 You would call, and I would answer you; you would long for the work of your hands. 16 For then you would number my steps; you would not keep watch over my sin; 17 my transgression would be sealed up in a bag, and you would cover over my iniquity. 18 “But the mountain falls and crumbles away, and the rock is removed from its place; 19 the waters wear away the stones; the torrents wash away the soil of the earth; so you destroy the hope of man. 20 You prevail forever against him, and he passes; you change his countenance, and send him away. 21 His sons come to honor, and he does not know it; they are brought low, and he perceives it not. 22 He feels only the pain of his own body, and he mourns only for himself.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

7 There is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its shoots will not die. 8 If its roots grow old in the ground and its stump starts to die in the soil, 9 the smell of water makes it thrive and produce twigs like a sapling. 10 But a man dies and fades away; he breathes his last—where is he? 11 As water disappears from the sea and a river becomes parched and dry, 12 so

man lies down never to rise again. They will not wake up until the heavens are no more; they will not stir from their sleep. 13 If only You would hide me in Sheol and conceal me until Your anger passes. If only You would appoint a time for me and then remember me. 14 When a man dies, will he come back to life? If so, I would wait all the days of my struggle until my relief comes. 15 You would call, and I would answer You. You would long for the work of Your hands. 16 For then You would count my steps but would not take note of my sin. 17 My rebellion would be sealed up in a bag, and You would cover over my iniquity. 18 But as a mountain collapses and crumbles and a rock is dislodged from its place, 19 as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil from the land, so You destroy a man's hope. 20 You completely overpower him, and he passes on; You change his appearance and send him away. 21 If his sons receive honor, he does not know it; if they become insignificant, he is unaware of it. 22 He feels only the pain of his own body and mourns only for himself.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

7 "At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. 8 Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, 9 yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant. 10 But a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more. 11 As the water of a lake dries up or a riverbed becomes parched and dry, 12 so he lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, people will not awake or be roused from their sleep. 13 "If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me! 14 If someone dies, will they live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. 15 You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. 16 Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. 17 My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin. 18 "But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place, 19 as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil, so you destroy a person's hope. 20 You overpower them once for all, and they are gone; you change their countenance and send them away. 21 If their children are honored, they do not know it; if their offspring are brought low, they do not see it. 22 They feel but the pain of their own bodies and mourn only for themselves."

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

J. Job Complains That God Destroys His Hope to Live (14:7–22)

This section opens with a comparison rather than with an axiom. In verses 7–9 human life is contrasted with a tree that is cut down. The tree can sprout again where there is water, but man dies and that is his end, verse 10. In verse 11 the nature analogy applies to lack of water, in which the dried-up lake or river is compared in verse 12 to humans who die and never rise again. Verses 13–17 interrupt the sequence, as did verses 3–4 in the first section, to express a hope for release from endless death. In verse 13 Job wishes that a time could be set for God to remember him. In verses 14–15 he is willing to wait for God to call him, and in verses 16–17 he longs for the time when God would not watch over his sins, but would forgive him. The nature analogy then picks up again with verse 18, in which the falling mountains, the erosion made by streams, is compared to the ways in

which man's hope is destroyed by God. The section, and the whole speech, concludes with man's suffering and death as a final statement of the human condition. [UBS Handbook]

7 “For there is hope for a tree, When it is cut down, that it will sprout again, And its shoots will not fail. 8 “Though its roots grow old in the ground And its stump dies in the dry soil, 9 At the scent of water it will flourish And put forth sprigs like a plant.

Note the picture of sprigs that grow when a tree is cut down at the trunk. Cf. the flower in v. 2.

Perhaps Job had in mind the olive tree that can live over a thousand years. Large parts of the tree look dead, but living and productive branches are still growing. [New American Commentary]

The tree, if we speak anthropopathically, can be said to have “hope” (הִוִּקֵת), a rare commodity in Job's life (17:15; 19:10; and cf. on 7:6; contrast 4:6; 8:13; 11:18, 20) and in human life generally if the hope is for resuscitation or revivification (see v 19, “so you destroy the hope of man”). There may be some allusion to a practice noted by J. G. Wetzste in (cited by Franz Delitzsch, p. 175) in Transjordan and around Damascus of cutting down old fig trees, walnuts and pomegranates, as well as vines that have ceased to bear good fruit; the stumps if watered put out new shoots the following year and subsequently bear good crops. Pliny speaks also of the laurel as keeping its life even when the trunk is cut down (Hist. nat. 15.30). For a tree, death brings new life—at least that is the hope. The old stump (cf. Isa 6:13; 11:1) may sprout new shoots (פִּלְחָהּ hiphil; cf. 29:20; Ps 90:5–6; perhaps Isa, 9:9 [10]; 40:31; Eccles 46:12), which may grow strong and not “fail” (תָּלָהּ, “desist” in v 6). [Word Biblical Commentary]

10 “But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he?

“But” = in contrast to the tree. Man is cut down and where is he? His body lies in the ground (v. 11).

11 “As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up, 12 So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.

Humans stay dead so long as the heavens remain, a familiar image for perpetuity (Deut 11:21; Jer 31:35–36; Ps 72:5, 7, 17; 89:30 [29], 38 [37]; 148:6). There is indeed a tradition in OT literature of an end to the universe in a cosmic catastrophe or exhaustion (Isa 34:4, the stars rot and the skies are rolled up like a scroll; 51:6 the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth wears out like a garment; Ps 102:26–27 [25–26], the heavens perish, the foundation of the earth wears out like a garment; cf. Heb 1:10–12); but it is doubtful whether this represents a genuine belief (as in 1 Enoch 45:4–5; 51:1–2) and is not rather a hyperbolic statement of the permanence of God, as if to say “even if heaven and earth were to cease to exist, God and his salvation would not.” In any case, there can be no

thought in the present passage of the downfall of the universe, since the point is wholly the finality of human death. [Word Biblical Commentary]

14:7–12. When a tree is chopped down it will spring up again. Personifying a tree as if it had a human nose, Job spoke of a tree scenting water and then growing. In contrast with the world of botany man has no such hope. When he dies and is laid low (ḥālaš, “to be disabled or prostrate”), he is gone. (The Heb. word for man, v. 10, is *geber*, “strong man”; cf. v. 14. Even strong men die! He in v. 10b is *’ādām*, the generic term for “mankind,” and man in v. 12 is *’iš*, “male.”)

This does not teach annihilation (cf. comments on v. 14). It simply means that a person cannot relive his entire life on earth in the same physical body. Though in the ground, he is not like a tree stump which, with its roots ... in the soil, can spring up again. But a person is like water that evaporates; when it is gone, it cannot be retrieved. Death is final. At this point Job, in his way of seeing things, denied the possibility of physical resurrection. Death, he stated, is not a sleep from which people can be awakened. Soon, however, Job wondered if resurrection might be possible (v. 14). [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 735]

“In the present world order no evidence exists that a person may return to life.” [Hartley, Job, 234, cited in NAC] — This, however, was not Job’s last thought on the subject.

13 “Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, That You would set a limit for me and remember me!”

Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol: in sharp contrast to verses 7–12, which hold out no hope of future life for people, Job now longs for future fellowship with God. The construction in this line is an idiom that suggests that Job realizes that his wish is unlikely to be granted. Hide means to place Job in a position of safety in Sheol where he will be free from his present sufferings. For Sheol see 7:9. [UBS Handbook]

For Sheol, see my notes on 7:9, 11:8.

Note the psalmic assertion that “His anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime” (Ps 30:6 [5])? Cf. Isa 54:8 “In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you.”

14 “If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my change comes.”

But is resurrection possible? Pondering that faint possibility—If a man dies, will he live again?—Job said he was willing to wait out his hard service—(*ṣābā*, “military service,” also trans. “hard service” in 7:1; Isa. 40:2) in this life, anticipating his “release” (NIV marg.; the Heb. for renewal is used of one group of soldiers relieving another group). Death, with its release from the burdens of this life, would be like an honorary discharge

or a changing of the guard. A person continues to exist after death, for he is transferred from one condition to another. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, 736]

Till my release should come: this expression is based on a military metaphor in which Job pictures himself standing at his post in Sheol, waiting to be relieved by another soldier. [UBS Handbook Series]

Verses 14–17 serve as the high point of Job’s speech and reaffirm his faith expressed in 13:15. Cf. 19:27.

15 “You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands.

When God does speak Job cannot answer (cf. 40:4-5).

16 “For now You number my steps, You do not observe my sin. 17 “My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And You wrap up my iniquity.

There is a controversy with whether this should be future or present:

It is far better to see vv 16–17 as continuing the “dream” of vv 13–15 (so Merx, Budde, Horst, Pope, Gordis, RSV, NAB, NIV). The present speech of Job would then conclude with two extended strophes, of five lines each (vv 13–17, 18–22) separated by the strongly contrastive particle מלואו “but now” (v 18). It is most improbable that only v 16a refers to the present (as Dhorme, Terrien, JB). [Word Biblical Commentary]

ESV and NIV has future:

15 You would call, and I would answer you; you would long for the work of your hands.
16 For then you would number my steps; you would not keep watch over my sin; 17 my transgression would be sealed up in a bag, and you would cover over my iniquity. [ESV]

[A]ccording to Pope this may refer to an ancient system of keeping inventory on animals. Small stones were dropped into a container or removed from it as the number and kind of animals a person owned changed. [UBS Handbook Series]

Two additional categories for “sin” appear here, thus encompassing all the categories for which Job might have been charged. The verse has two nice illustrations for how God would handle those sins. He would seal them up in a bag and plaster them over. The verb in the second line appeared in 13:4, “smear.” The JB has “whiten,” and several versions have “coat over.” Job anticipated the obliteration of his sins on that great day of “renewal,” and as a result he would be white as snow or wool (Isa 1:18). [New American Commentary]

18 “But the falling mountain crumbles away, And the rock moves from its place; 19 Water wears away stones, Its torrents wash away the dust of the earth; So You destroy man’s hope.

Mountains do not “fall” down, not even gradually (contrast RV, RSV); the picture must be of the weathering away of the mountainside. Mountains of course are symbols of the immovable and unshakable (though cf. 9:5; Ps 46:3 [2]), but even they can over time be worn down. The “rock” that falls is probably the outcrop of rock on a cliff that is dislodged ultimately by the elements. The image of water wearing away stone is not met with elsewhere in the Bible (on Prov 19:13 cf. 27:15), but cf. Lucretius 5.306–307, 313–15 (“Do we not see lumps of rock roll down, torn from lofty mountains, too weak to bear and endure the mighty force of time finite?”). The last image in v 19b is apparently of soil being gradually eroded from fields, or possibly from the banks of rivers. [Word Biblical Commentary]

Unfortunately the clouds of doubt and despair closed in swiftly, and Job did not end this first cycle of speeches on the high and bright notes of the preceding stanza. Verse 18 picks up where v. 12 left off, comparing the fleeting days of mortals to eroding mountains. [New American Commentary]

20 “You forever overpower him and he departs; You change his appearance and send him away.

Man dies and his appearance changes (in death).

Thou changest his countenance is in the Hebrew “changing his face” and refers to the distorted face of the dead person. RSV reflects the Hebrew form and does not say what kind of change takes place, but TEV does not leave it in doubt: “His face is twisted in death.” RSV and others understand God to be the one who changes the face. Others, like TEV, take it that the face is changed as a result of death. [UBS Handbook]

21 “His sons achieve honor, but he does not know it; Or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive it. 22 “But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself.”

Cf. Eccl. 9:5, 10:10.

The first concerns the friends. Now that they each have spoken, it is time that Job tell them, and us, what he has made of their words. Hitherto, we have learned from him that he thinks little of their loyalty (6:14, 20), and that he feels disregarded by them (6:26); we have seen him agreeing, on one point at least, with them (9:2). But on the whole he has ignored them; while they have addressed him throughout, he has tended either to soliloquize or to address himself to God. Here, on the contrary, he addresses them directly in 12:2–3 and 13:1–12, and parodies their speeches to him in 12:7–12. His tone is assertive, sarcastic, disputatious. He does not here speak of his feelings about them (as in 6:14, 20), but contrasts himself with them on the intellectual plane. When he says his

wisdom is not inferior to theirs (12:2; 13:2), he means that his is superior; he has abandoned the idea of them as friends and he is treating them as conversation partners, colleagues at a theological seminar. It is a token of his greater psychic stability, now that he has made his decision about confronting God, that he speaks of looking to them not for solidarity but for explanation, and can even esteem himself their superior for his greater experience of reality. In the end, he can even become patronizing toward them, proffering them good advice (13:9) and laboring the point that now a legal process is in motion between himself and God their status has changed. No longer can they delude themselves that they speak for heaven against Job; now that they have become nothing but witnesses, partisans for neither party in the dispute, they can testify only to the facts, not to theological theories. But of course they have scant acquaintance with facts, having always believed that wisdom is inherited from one's elders (12:12) rather than fashioned in the crucible of experience; so on pain of having their stupidity exposed, or worse, of falling foul of the deity for unbecoming partisanship, their best course of action is to fall silent (13:5, 13). [Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 338]

Something dramatic has happened in this speech. After all Job's demands to be put out of his misery as soon as possible, and after all his assertion that it is hopeless to dispute with God, he finds himself doing the dangerous and the impossible thing. Job now formally obliges God to give an account of the crimes for which he is being punished. And that demand, now that it has been made, cannot be taken back. Job has not gone to court to plead for his life or to beg for mercy, but to clear his name. He has no faith in the goodness of God and little faith in God's justice, but he believes so strongly in his own innocence that he is convinced that sooner or later he will be vindicated. [David J. A. Clines, "Job," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 470]