

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

See outlines below.

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

20:1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered, 2 “Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, Even because of my inward agitation. 3 “I listened to the reproof which insults me, And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer. 4 “Do you know this from of old, From the establishment of man on earth, 5 That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary? 6 “Though his loftiness reaches the heavens, And his head touches the clouds, 7 He perishes forever like his refuse; Those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’ 8 “He flies away like a dream, and they cannot find him; Even like a vision of the night he is chased away. 9 “The eye which saw him sees him no longer, And his place no longer beholds him. 10 “His sons favor the poor, And his hands give back his wealth. 11 “His bones are full of his youthful vigor, But it lies down with him in the dust. 12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth And he hides it under his tongue, 13 Though he desires it and will not let it go, But holds it in his mouth, 14 Yet his food in his stomach is changed To the venom of cobras within him. 15 “He swallows riches, But will vomit them up; God will expel them from his belly. 16 “He sucks the poison of cobras; The viper’s tongue slays him. 17 “He does not look at the streams, The rivers flowing with honey and curds. 18 “He returns what he has attained And cannot swallow it; As to the riches of his trading, He cannot even enjoy them. 19 “For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; He has seized a house which he has not built. 20 “Because he knew no quiet within him, He does not retain anything he desires. 21 “Nothing remains for him to devour, Therefore his prosperity does not endure. 22 “In the fullness of his plenty he will be cramped; The hand of everyone who suffers will come against him. 23 “When he fills his belly, God will send His fierce anger on him And will rain it on him while he is eating. 24 “He may flee from the iron weapon, But the bronze bow will pierce him. 25 “It is drawn forth and comes out of his back, Even the glittering point from his gall. Terrors come upon him, 26 Complete darkness is held in reserve for his treasures, And unfanned fire will devour him; It will consume the survivor in his tent. 27 “The heavens will reveal his iniquity, And the earth will rise up against him. 28 “The increase of his house will depart; His possessions will flow away in the day of His anger. 29 “This is the wicked man’s portion from God, Even the heritage decreed to him by God.”

21:1 Then Job answered, 2 “Listen carefully to my speech, And let this be your way of consolation. 3 “Bear with me that I may speak; Then after I have spoken, you may mock. 4 “As for me, is my complaint to man? And why should I not be impatient? 5 “Look at me, and be astonished, And put your hand over your mouth. 6 “Even when I remember, I am disturbed, And horror takes hold of my flesh. 7 “Why do the wicked still live, Continue on, also become very powerful? 8 “Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes, 9 Their houses are safe from fear, And the rod of God is not on them. 10 “His ox mates without fail; His cow calves and does not abort. 11 “They send forth their little ones like the flock, And their children skip about. 12 “They sing to the timbrel and harp And rejoice at the sound of the flute. 13 “They spend their days in prosperity, And suddenly they go down to Sheol. 14 “They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Your ways. 15 ‘Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, And what would we gain if we entreat Him?’ 16 “Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me. 17 “How often is the lamp of the wicked put out, Or does their calamity fall on them? Does God

apportion destruction in His anger? 18 “Are they as straw before the wind, And like chaff which the storm carries away? 19 “You say, ‘God stores away a man’s iniquity for his sons.’ Let God repay him so that he may know it. 20 “Let his own eyes see his decay, And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21 “For what does he care for his household after him, When the number of his months is cut off? 22 “Can anyone teach God knowledge, In that He judges those on high? 23 “One dies in his full strength, Being wholly at ease and satisfied; 24 His sides are filled out with fat, And the marrow of his bones is moist, 25 While another dies with a bitter soul, Never even tasting anything good. 26 “Together they lie down in the dust, And worms cover them. 27 “Behold, I know your thoughts, And the plans by which you would wrong me. 28 “For you say, ‘Where is the house of the nobleman, And where is the tent, the dwelling places of the wicked?’ 29 “Have you not asked wayfaring men, And do you not recognize their witness? 30 “For the wicked is reserved for the day of calamity; They will be led forth at the day of fury. 31 “Who will confront him with his actions, And who will repay him for what he has done? 32 “While he is carried to the grave, Men will keep watch over his tomb. 33 “The clods of the valley will gently cover him; Moreover, all men will follow after him, While countless ones go before him. 34 “How then will you vainly comfort me, For your answers remain full of falsehood?”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

Bible Knowledge Commentary

- I. Zophar's Second Speech (Chap. 20)
 - A. The anger of Zophar (20:1–3)
 - B. The brief prosperity of the wicked (20:4–11)
 - C. The impoverishment of the wicked (20:12–19)
 - D. The anger of God against the wicked (20:20–29)

- II. Job's Second Reply to Zophar (Chap. 21)
 - A. Request for silence (21:1–6)
 - B. The prosperity of the wicked (21:7–16)
 - C. The death of the wicked (21:17–26)
 - D. The death of the wicked in prosperity (21:27–34)

UBS Handbook Series

- I. Zophar's Second Speech (20:1–29)
 - A. Zophar is Anxious to Speak to (20:1–3)
 - B. Zophar Describes the Fate of the Wicked (20:4–11)
 - C. Zophar Compares Evil to Food Eaten by the Wicked (20:12–22)
 - D. Zophar Describes Disasters That Happen to the Wicked (20:23–29)

- II. Job Replies (21:1–34)
 - A. Job Asks His Friends to Listen to Him (21:1–6)
 - B. Job Claims the Wicked Are Happy (21:7–16)
 - C. Job Claims the Wicked Go Unpunished (21:17–26)
 - D. Job Claims That the Wicked Live Well and Are Buried with Honor (21:27–34)

The Outline Bible

- I. Zophar's Denunciations (20:1-29)
 - A. I Resent Your Rebuke (20:1-3)
 - 1. Zophar feels insulted by Job's rebuke
 - B. The Ways of the Wicked (20:4-29)
 - 1. Zophar returns to his theme of describing the sad fate of the wicked

- II. Job's Defense (21:1-34) — Job attacks Zophar's false assumption that the wicked are always punished for their sins in this life
 - A. The Wicked Prosper (21:1-18)
 - 1. It seems to Job that the more wicked people are, the more they prosper!
 - B. Don't Punish Their Children (21:19-21)
 - 1. Job rejects the theory that justice is served when the children of the ungodly are punished
 - C. Death Comes to Good and Bad Alike (21:22-26)

1. The same fate eventually awaits all people—good or bad, rich or poor
- D. No Guarantee of Justice in this Life (21:27-34)
 1. Often the wicked flourish until death and then are buried with great honor

Biblical Studies: Job (Sam Storms)

- I. Zophar's Second Speech (Job 20)
 - A. Zophar rebukes Job for his insolence—20:1-3
 - B. Zophar reminds Job of the woes of the wicked—20:4-29
- II. Job's Sixth Speech (Job 21)
 - A. He calls for their silence—21:1-6
 - B. He claims that the wicked do indeed prosper—21:7-21
 - C. He counters the law of retribution—21:22-34

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

- I. Zophar's Discourse on the Fate of the Wicked (20:1-29)
 - A. Offense at Criticism (20:1-3)
 - B. Retribution for the Wicked (20:4-29)
 1. The Wicked Have Always Suffered (20:4-11)
 2. God Will Certainly Punish the Wicked (20:12-19)
 3. The Fate God Allots the Wicked (20:20-29)
- II. Job's Reply That the Wicked Go Unpunished (21:1-34)
 - A. Request for Attention (21:1-3)
 - B. Exceptions to the Rule (21:4-26)
 1. The Unchallenged Life of the Wicked (21:4-16)
 - a. Introduction (21:4-6)
 - b. It Seems They Get Only Good (21:7-16)
 2. They Escape Punishment (21:17-21)
 3. God's Apparent Arbitrariness (21:22-26)
 4. Request for Friends to Consider This (21:27-33)
 5. Denunciation of Friends (21:34)

Be Patient: Job (Warren W. Wiersbe)

- I. The awful fate of the wicked (Job 20:4-29)
 - A. Their life is brief (Job 20:4-11)
 - B. Their pleasure is temporary (Job 20:12-19)
 - C. Their death is painful (Job 20:20-29)
- II. The actual end of the wicked man (Job 21:1-34)
 - A. The life of the wicked may be long (Job 21:7-16)
 - B. The wicked do not often experience calamity? (Job 21:17-21)
 - C. The wicked die just like other people (Job 21:22-34)

BASIC OUTLINE:

- I. The Last Words of Zophar (20:1–29)
 - A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)
 - B. The Wicked Have Temporary Happiness (Job 20:12–19)
 - C. The Wicked Die Painful Deaths (Job 20:20–29)

- II. Job’s Rejoinder (21:1–34)
 - A. The Wicked Do Live Long Lives (21:7–16)
 - B. The Wicked Do Live Happy Lives (21:17–21)
 - C. The Wicked Do Die the Same as the Righteous (21:22–34)

SERMON OUTLINE:

- I. The Last Words of Zophar (20:1–29)
 - A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)
 - B. The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure (20:12–22)
 - C. The Wicked Die Painful Deaths (20:23–29)
 - 1. Preparation for Destruction (23)
 - 2. Picture of Death (24-25)
 - 3. Permanent Destitution (26, 28)
 - 4. Predestined Decree (27, 29)

- II. Job’s Rejoinder (21:1–34)
 - A. The Wicked Do Live Long Lives (21:1–16)
 - B. The Wicked Do Live Pleasurable Lives (21:17–21)
 - C. The Wicked Do Die the Same as the Righteous (21:22–34)

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): Zophar’s faulty logic that the wicked perish quickly and Job’s point by point rejoinder

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it’s talking about): that experience does not match Zophar’s contentions.

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): There is no logical connection between suffering and God’s favor.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: When accused (or suffering) unjustly flee from God to God

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: Zophar’s Parting Shot and Job’s Rejoinder (Parts 1 & 2)

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Zophar's second speech follows the same broad outline as Bildad's second speech—criticism of Job and a lengthy tirade on retribution for sin. Bildad's was more dynamistic; Zophar's was more divine, that is, stressing the activity of God in the administration of justice on the wicked. Zophar seemed less able to say anything new. This, in fact, was the last time he spoke. [Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 211]

Whereas Zophar filled his speech with illustrations of how the wicked are punished, Job filled this response with illustrations of how the wicked escape unscathed. This is the nub of the question and the irreconcilable difference between the friends' view of retribution and Job's sure conviction that he was an innocent sufferer. [Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 218–219]

Zophar's second speech is neatly structured. After the conventional exordium (vv 2–3), his traditional material on the fate of the wicked falls into three sections: (a) How thorough is the annihilation of the wicked! (vv 4–11). (b) There is no lasting profit from wrongdoing (vv 12–23). (c) The inescapable end of the wicked (vv 24–29). Like the other friends, Zophar confines himself in this speech of the second cycle almost exclusively to a depiction of the fate of the wicked, though to a different purpose and effect from the other friends. Whereas for Eliphaz (chap. 15) the fate of the wicked is a picture of what Job is not, for Bildad (chap. 18) it is a picture of what Job may become, and for Zophar it is a picture of what Job will not avoid without a radical change. As usual, we do not find Zophar explicitly responding to what Job has just said, though reminiscences of earlier phrases of various speakers are quite plentiful. Habel believes that “ironic barbs adorn Zophar's portrait,” but the examples cited fail to persuade one that this is so.

Throughout the entire depiction, which is almost wholly metaphorical, only one verse gives any specifics of the wicked man's wrongdoing: in v 19 we learn that he has crushed the poor and seized the houses of others (but cf. also v 15a). This is confirmation enough that Zophar is not speaking expressly of Job. It is a signal too, since there are more kinds of wickedness than this, that what we are reading in this speech is a topos, an illustrative portrait of a single but typical individual. [David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 482]

VERSES 20:1-3

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered, 2 “Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, Even because of my inward agitation. 3 “I listened to the reproof which insults me, And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said: 2 “Therefore my thoughts answer me, because of my haste within me. 3 I hear censure that insults me, and out of my understanding a spirit answers me.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite replied: 2 This is why my unsettling thoughts compel me to answer, because I am upset! 3 I have heard a rebuke that insults me, and my understanding makes me reply.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite replied: 2 “My troubled thoughts prompt me to answer because I am greatly disturbed. 3 I hear a rebuke that dishonors me, and my understanding inspires me to reply.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Zophar’s second speech is neatly structured. After the conventional exordium (vv 2–3), his traditional material on the fate of the wicked falls into three sections: (a) How thorough is the annihilation of the wicked! (vv 4–11). (b) There is no lasting profit from wrongdoing (vv 12–23). (c) The inescapable end of the wicked (vv 24–29). . . .

Throughout the entire depiction, which is almost wholly metaphorical, only one verse gives any specifics of the wicked man’s wrongdoing: in v 19 we learn that he has crushed the poor and seized the houses of others (but cf. also v 15a). This is confirmation enough that Zophar is not speaking expressly of Job. It is a signal too, since there are more kinds of wickedness than this, that what we are reading in this speech is a topos, an illustrative portrait of a single but typical individual. [David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 482]

Zophar is next in line to speak, but he has nothing new to say. It’s the same old story: God punishes the wicked, so Job had better get right with God. His key text is Job 20:5, “The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.” This theme has already been discussed by Bildad (8:11–19; 18) and Eliphaz (15:20–35),

but Zophar is so disturbed by Job's last speech that he feels he must speak. [Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient, "Be" Commentary Series* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 77]

[Zophar] has three things to say to Job. . . . First, he wants Job to understand *the wicked do not live long* (20:4-11). Second, *the pleasures of the wicked are temporary* (20:12-19). Finally, he affirms *God's judgment falls hard on the wicked* (20:20-29). [Swindoll, 167]

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered,

Cf. 2:11 and 11:1 (the latter passage begins the same as here).

2 "Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, Even because of my inward agitation. 3 "I listened to the reproof which insults me, And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.

Zophar has "disquieting thoughts" or is "pained" / "troubled" at what he hears. His words convey the impression that Zophar is "rattled."

Insulted Zophar who listened to Job these numerous times. Principle: we don't always need to respond to everything we deem an insult. We may be wrong.

Zophar seemed most disturbed, not by Job's affirmation of hope but because he was "dishonored" by his warning at the close of chap. 19. [Robert L. Alden]

What has disturbed Zophar is that if Job is right everything Zophar stands for is wrong.

VERSES 20:4-11

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

4 “Do you know this from of old, From the establishment of man on earth, 5 That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary? 6 “Though his loftiness reaches the heavens, And his head touches the clouds, 7 He perishes forever like his refuse; Those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’ 8 “He flies away like a dream, and they cannot find him; Even like a vision of the night he is chased away. 9 “The eye which saw him sees him no longer, And his place no longer beholds him. 10 “His sons favor the poor, And his hands give back his wealth. 11 “His bones are full of his youthful vigor, But it lies down with him in the dust.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

4 Do you not know this from of old, since man was placed on earth, 5 that the exulting of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment? 6 Though his height mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds, 7 he will perish forever like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’ 8 He will fly away like a dream and not be found; he will be chased away like a vision of the night. 9 The eye that saw him will see him no more, nor will his place any more behold him. 10 His children will seek the favor of the poor, and his hands will give back his wealth. 11 His bones are full of his youthful vigor, but it will lie down with him in the dust.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

4 Don’t you know that ever since antiquity, from the time man was placed on earth, 5 the joy of the wicked has been brief and the happiness of the godless has lasted only a moment? 6 Though his arrogance reaches heaven, and his head touches the clouds, 7 he will vanish forever like his own dung. Those who know him will ask, “Where is he?” 8 He will fly away like a dream and never be found; he will be chased away like a vision in the night. 9 The eye that saw him will see him no more, and his household will no longer see him. 10 His children will beg from the poor, for his own hands must give back his wealth. 11 His bones may be full of youthful vigor, but will lie down with him in the grave.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

4 “Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since mankind was placed on the earth, 5 that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment. 6 Though the pride of the godless person reaches to the heavens and his head touches the clouds, 7 he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’ 8 Like a dream he flies away, no more to be found, banished like a vision of the night. 9 The eye that saw him will not see him again; his place will look on him no more. 10 His children must make amends to the poor; his own hands must give back his wealth. 11 The youthful vigor that fills his bones will lie with him in the dust.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Zophar now takes up the theme presented by Bildad in his first speech (8:11–19) and Eliphaz in his second speech (15:29–35). Zophar deals in generalities in describing how the wicked person comes to his end before his time. [William David Reayburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 370]

4 **“Do you know this from of old, From the establishment of man on earth,**

Better, the ESV: “Do you not know this from of old, since man was placed on earth,”

“know” = “yada” (cf. Job in 19:25).

From the establishment of man on earth: this expression refers, as in Deuteronomy 4:32, to the time of creation; that is, “ever since God created people (Adam and Eve) and put them on the earth.”

5 **That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary?**

Zophar’s thesis statement. They do, in fact, “triumph” (cf. HCSB “joy”) but that is for a moment.

Cf. Psalm 37:35–36 35 I have seen a wicked, violent man Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil. 36 Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more; I sought for him, but he could not be found.

Zophar declares that from the beginning of human history the triumphing (“mirth”) of the wicked has been short. We wonder where he got his information, for the Lord waited 120 years before sending the Flood (Gen. 6:3), and God gave the wicked Canaanites at least four centuries before He judged them (15:13–16).

Most of the people in Scripture who pondered the problem of evil in the world started from a different premise—the wicked enjoy long life and freedom from trouble, while the righteous suffer much and die young (Pss. 37; 73; Jer. 12:1–4). Zophar was deliberately blocking out a lot of data to prove his point. [Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient, “Be” Commentary Series* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 77–78]

6 **“Though his loftiness reaches the heavens, And his head touches the clouds,**

20:6 This verse too is noteworthy from the standpoint of structure. In Hebrew it is a perfect three-step chiasmus.

- A Though reaches
- B to the heavens
- C his pride
- C’ and his head

B' to the clouds
A' touches.

The boasts of the king of Babylon imagined in Isaiah's taunt song come to mind (Isa 14:13–14). [Robert L. Alden]

7 He perishes forever like his refuse; Those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'

7 he will perish forever like his own dung . . . [ESV]
In those days, one's excrement was buried and returned to dust.

8 "He flies away like a dream, and they cannot find him; Even like a vision of the night he is chased away. 9 "The eye which saw him sees him no longer, And his place no longer beholds him.

The eye which saw him will see him no more: some understand this to refer to the eye of God, as in 7:8, where Job said "The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more." In 7:19–20 Job complains about God spying on him and calls God "Thou watcher of men." It is not recommended that the allusion be made explicit by saying "The eye of God..." It is more probable that the reference is to people generally who were accustomed to seeing Job go about each day, and this fits better with the next line. [UBS Handbook Series]

When you survey both sacred and secular history, you discover that there are no ironclad rules that govern when either the wicked or the righteous will die. Generally speaking, people who ignore God's laws are more vulnerable to problems that could lead to an early death. Sexual promiscuity, the use of narcotics (including alcohol and tobacco), and a reckless lifestyle can all help shorten a person's life; but there is no guarantee that this will happen. It's amazing how some godless people live to an old age. Perhaps this is the grace of God in giving them time to repent. Zophar was not talking about the natural consequences of a wicked life, but the judgment of God on sinners. [Warren W. Wiersbe]

The godly Scottish Presbyterian minister Robert Murray McCheyne died when he was only twenty-nine years old, and missionary William Whiting Borden ("Borden of Yale") was only twenty-five years old when he died in Egypt. David Brainerd, saintly missionary to the Native Americans, was twenty-nine when he died. According to Zophar, these men must have been guilty of secret sin, and God took them at an early age. Warren Wiersbe]

10 "His sons favor the poor, And his hands give back his wealth.

"No truly satisfactory interpretation of this awkward verse exists." [David J. A. Clines]

ESV: His children will seek the favor of the poor, and his hands will give back his wealth.
HCSB: His children will beg from the poor, for his own hands must give back his wealth.

NIV: His children must make amends to the poor; his own hands must give back his wealth.

Repeatedly in this oration, Zophar mentioned wealth (vv. 10, 15, 18, 20–22, 26) and its transience, an expansion of Eliphaz’s earlier statement along that line (15:29). All this suggested that Job acquired his riches dishonestly. [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), 742]

The thought of Zophar is that the sons will be forced to return the ill-gotten wealth the wicked father has taken from the poor, and so something similar to TEV is recommended. This line may also be expressed, for example, “and his children will give back the wealth he stole from the poor” or “The sons of the wicked father will have to return to the poor what their father took from them.” [UBS Handbook Series]

There is some question as to whether verse 10a means that his children will be so poor that they have to beg from the poor (ESV) or that his children will have to pay back to the poor what their father stole from them. [Ash, 222]

11 “His bones are full of his youthful vigor, But it lies down with him in the dust.

I.e. t/wicked die young.

Opposite of Billy Joel’s 1977 hit:

So come on Virginia show me a sign
Send up a signal and I'll throw you the line
The stained-glass curtain you're hiding behind
Never let's in the sun
Darlin' only the good die young
Woah
I tell ya
Only the good die young
Only the good die young
[Billy Joel, 1977, “The Stranger” album]

*So come on Job, listen to us
We're here to help, don't ya' fret and fuss
If you don't repent you will most surely die
And that won't be much fun.
You see, only the wicked die young.*

VERSES 20:12-22

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth And he hides it under his tongue, 13 Though he desires it and will not let it go, But holds it in his mouth, 14 Yet his food in his stomach is changed To the venom of cobras within him. 15 “He swallows riches, But will vomit them up; God will expel them from his belly. 16 “He sucks the poison of cobras; The viper’s tongue slays him. 17 “He does not look at the streams, The rivers flowing with honey and curds. 18 “He returns what he has attained And cannot swallow it; As to the riches of his trading, He cannot even enjoy them. 19 “For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; He has seized a house which he has not built. 20 “Because he knew no quiet within him, He does not retain anything he desires. 21 “Nothing remains for him to devour, Therefore his prosperity does not endure. 22 “In the fullness of his plenty he will be cramped; The hand of everyone who suffers will come against him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth, though he hides it under his tongue, 13 though he is loath to let it go and holds it in his mouth, 14 yet his food is turned in his stomach; it is the venom of cobras within him. 15 He swallows down riches and vomits them up again; God casts them out of his belly. 16 He will suck the poison of cobras; the tongue of a viper will kill him. 17 He will not look upon the rivers, the streams flowing with honey and curds. 18 He will give back the fruit of his toil and will not swallow it down; from the profit of his trading he will get no enjoyment. 19 For he has crushed and abandoned the poor; he has seized a house that he did not build. 20 “Because he knew no contentment in his belly, he will not let anything in which he delights escape him. 21 There was nothing left after he had eaten; therefore his prosperity will not endure. 22 In the fullness of his sufficiency he will be in distress; the hand of everyone in misery will come against him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

12 Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth and he conceals it under his tongue, 13 though he cherishes it and will not let it go but keeps it in his mouth, 14 yet the food in his stomach turns into cobras’ venom inside him. 15 He swallows wealth but must vomit it up; God will force it from his stomach. 16 He will suck the poison of cobras; a viper’s fangs will kill him. 17 He will not enjoy the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream. 18 He must return the fruit of his labor without consuming it; he doesn’t enjoy the profits from his trading. 19 For he oppressed and abandoned the poor; he seized a house he did not build. 20 Because his appetite is never satisfied, he does not let anything he desires escape. 21 Nothing is left for him to consume; therefore, his prosperity will not last. 22 At the height of his success distress will come to him; the full weight of misery will crush him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue, 13 though he cannot bear to let it go and lets it linger in his mouth, 14 yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will

become the venom of serpents within him. 15 He will spit out the riches he swallowed; God will make his stomach vomit them up. 16 He will suck the poison of serpents; the fangs of an adder will kill him. 17 He will not enjoy the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream. 18 What he toiled for he must give back uneaten; he will not enjoy the profit from his trading. 19 For he has oppressed the poor and left them destitute; he has seized houses he did not build. 20 “Surely he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot save himself by his treasure. 21 Nothing is left for him to devour; his prosperity will not endure. 22 In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth And he hides it under his tongue, 13 Though he desires it and will not let it go, But holds it in his mouth, 14 Yet his food in his stomach is changed To the venom of cobras within him.

This second strophe defines itself by the sustained metaphor of eating: we have the mouth (v 12), the tongue (v 12), the palate (v 13), the stomach (v 14), the innards (v 14), the belly (vv 15, 20, 23); there is savoring (v 12), swallowing (v 15), vomiting and disgorging (v 15), sucking (v 16), disgorging (v 18), not swallowing (v 18), eating (v 21); there is sweetness (v 12), oil, honey, and cream (v 17), food (v 23); above all, there is fullness of abundance (v 22) and filling to the full (v 23). Not surprisingly, the metaphor is deployed in a variety of ways. [David J. A. Clines]

“Some people cannot resist food or drink they know will kill them.” [Robert L. Alden]

Though he hides it under his tongue: the purpose of putting the sweet object under the tongue is to make it last and so keep the taste of sweetness lingering in the mouth. This line may be rendered, for example, “even if he keeps the sweetness hidden under his tongue” or “even if he prolongs the sweetness by putting it under his tongue.”

Though he is loath to let it go: verse 13 expresses the purpose of verse 12b, and TEV accordingly reduces these two lines to one, “that he keeps ... flavor,” and joins verse 13 with verse 12.

And holds it in his mouth: FRCL has not condensed these lines like TEV, and for translators who are able to preserve them meaningfully, this translation offers a good model:

- 12 In his mouth evil is sweet like candy,
and he slips it beneath his tongue.
13 He holds it there for a long time, he does not let it go,
prolonging the pleasure of its flavor.

It is the gall of asps within him: the ancient view was that the gall bladder of snakes secreted poison, and consequently gall of asps means “snake poison.” The word translated asps refers to a poisonous snake, but not exclusively to the asp. Within him is

literally “in his intestines.” TEV “as bitter as any poison could be” is somewhat misleading. This line is an excellent example of raising poetic intensity of a general word in line a through the use of a more specific term in line b. In this way his food in line a is bitter in his stomach, but in line b it is more than bitter; it is poison in him. The conclusion of verse 14 may be expressed, for example, “it becomes like snake poison inside him” or “it is as deadly as snake venom in his intestines” [UBS Handbook Series]

Cf. ethylene glycol poisoning.

Proverbs 20:17 Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.

15 “He swallows riches, But will vomit them up; God will expel them from his belly. 16 “He sucks the poison of cobras; The viper’s tongue slays him.

There is a tradition in the Bible of connecting evil and snakes. The tradition began in the garden of Eden (Gen 3), continued with the serpents in the wilderness (Num 21:6; cf. 2 Kgs 18:4), and on to “that ancient serpent called the devil” (Rev 12:9). [Robert L. Alden]

17 “He does not look at the streams, The rivers flowing with honey and curds. 18 “He returns what he has attained And cannot swallow it; As to the riches of his trading, He cannot even enjoy them.

He will not look upon the rivers, the streams ...: this verse is difficult to understand. He will not look upon is generally agreed to mean “He will not live to see.” However, the preposition which follows the word translated look gives the sense of seeing with pleasure or satisfaction, so SPCL has “He will not be able to enjoy,” which can also be translated “He will not live to enjoy.” [UBS Handbook Series]

19 “For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; He has seized a house which he has not built.

Riches gained by godless means are not retained, Zophar argued. In fact they are vomited up and they kill the wicked like the deadly poison of serpents (cf. v. 14) or the venom of an adder’s fangs. [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

For the first time a specific sin appears. The primary crime that Zophar had in mind, for which these criminals suffered, was oppression. Throughout the Old Testament are found numerous injunctions to care for the poor, be generous to widows, and exercise generosity and hospitality (Lev 19:10; Deut 15:4; Ps 72:4, 12–14; Prov 31:8–9; Isa 10:1–2; Ezek 18:12; Amos 5:11, etc.). Benevolence is a mark of a God-fearing people. [Robert L. Alden]

Cf. the similar to Job’s face accusation in 22:5–9:

5 “Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquities without end? 6 “For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, And stripped men naked. 7 “To the weary you have given no water to drink, And from the hungry you have withheld bread. 8 “But the earth belongs to the mighty man, And the honorable man dwells in it. 9 “You have sent widows away empty, And the strength of the orphans has been crushed.

20 “Because he knew no quiet within him, He does not retain anything he desires.

Difficult verse. Because his greed knew no rest is literally “He knew no quietness in his belly.” [UBS Handbook Series]

He will not save anything in which he delights is literally “He will not cause his valued things to escape.” This line has been given many interpretations. The most probable is that, due to his greed in the previous line, he goes too far and in the end has nothing left. [UBS Handbook Series]

ESV: 20 “Because he knew no contentment in his belly, he will not let anything in which he delights escape him.

HCSB: 20 Because his appetite is never satisfied, he does not let anything he desires escape.

NIV: 20 “Surely he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot save himself by his treasure.

21 “Nothing remains for him to devour, Therefore his prosperity does not endure.

Sudden loss.

Verse 21 repeats in different words the thought expressed in verse 20. There was nothing left after he had eaten is literally “There is no survivor from his eating.” Nothing left translates the same Hebrew word which RSV renders “survivor” in 18:19. It is not food that he devours, but the poor. TEV keeps only the image of food with “When he eats there is nothing left over,” which depicts a gluttonous person at his food. NIV improves on this: “Nothing is left for him to devour.” SPCL improves on that again: “Nothing escapes his voracity” (gluttonous appetite). FRCL is still better: “No one escapes his voracity.” This line may also be rendered, for example, “He is so greedy that nobody can escape him” or “He wants everything, and so he catches everybody.” In some languages we may say idiomatically, “He is greedy and eats everybody,” or “He is so greedy he doesn’t stop until he has eaten up everybody.” [UBS Handbook Series]

22 “In the fullness of his plenty he will be cramped; The hand of everyone who suffers will come against him.

Of course Zophar had Job in mind, but later the suffering saint, here badgered again by verbal blows, denied such accusations (29:12, 15; 31:16–22). [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

In the fulness of his sufficiency he will be in straits: the wicked man is now said to be in trouble “at the height of his success, wealth.” He cannot find satisfaction no matter how much he succeeds nor how much wealth he obtains. It is not the absence of satisfaction that strikes him, but more actively, “anguish takes hold of, seizes him.” This line may be rendered, for example, “When he has acquired everything he is full of trouble,” “No matter how much wealth he has, he is never happy,” or “Even though he succeeds in all he does, anguish gets him down.” [UBS Handbook Series]

Cf. NIV: In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him.

VERSES 20:23-29

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

23 “When he fills his belly, God will send His fierce anger on him And will rain it on him while he is eating. 24 “He may flee from the iron weapon, But the bronze bow will pierce him. 25 “It is drawn forth and comes out of his back, Even the glittering point from his gall. Terrors come upon him, 26 Complete darkness is held in reserve for his treasures, And unfanned fire will devour him; It will consume the survivor in his tent. 27 “The heavens will reveal his iniquity, And the earth will rise up against him. 28 “The increase of his house will depart; His possessions will flow away in the day of His anger. 29 “This is the wicked man’s portion from God, Even the heritage decreed to him by God.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

23 To fill his belly to the full, God will send his burning anger against him and rain it upon him into his body. 24 He will flee from an iron weapon; a bronze arrow will strike him through. 25 It is drawn forth and comes out of his body; the glittering point comes out of his gallbladder; terrors come upon him. 26 Utter darkness is laid up for his treasures; a fire not fanned will devour him; what is left in his tent will be consumed. 27 The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him. 28 The possessions of his house will be carried away, dragged off in the day of God’s wrath. 29 This is the wicked man’s portion from God, the heritage decreed for him by God.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

23 When he fills his stomach, God will send His burning anger against him, raining it down on him while he is eating. 24 If he flees from an iron weapon, an arrow from a bronze bow will pierce him. 25 He pulls it out of his back, the flashing tip out of his liver. Terrors come over him. 26 Total darkness is reserved for his treasures. A fire unfanned by human hands will consume him; it will feed on what is left in his tent. 27 The heavens will expose his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him. 28 The possessions in his house will be removed, flowing away on the day of God’s anger. 29 This is the wicked man’s lot from God, the inheritance God ordained for him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

23 When he has filled his belly, God will vent his burning anger against him and rain down his blows on him. 24 Though he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze-tipped arrow pierces him. 25 He pulls it out of his back, the gleaming point out of his liver. Terrors will come over him; 26 total darkness lies in wait for his treasures. A fire unfanned will consume him and devour what is left in his tent. 27 The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him. 28 A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God’s wrath. 29 Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

23 **“When he fills his belly, God will send His fierce anger on him And will rain it on him while he is eating.**

Verse 23 has three lines, but TEV has merged the second and third lines. The figure of eating continues in this verse.

To fill his belly to the full: this line is omitted by the Septuagint and also by NJB and NEB. The meaning of the line is not very clear. Dhorme understands it to carry the same thought as the preceding verses; that is, in the moment when the wicked man is filling his belly (taking from the poor), God will strike him down. So Dhorme translates “When he is occupied in filling his belly.” TEV “Let him eat all he wants” interprets belly to refer to literal eating, and this is what most translators understand here.

The second line, God will send his fierce anger into him, is literally “He will send....” Nearly all interpreters agree that “he” refers to God, and so TEV “God will punish him in fury and anger” is a good rendering. This line may also be rendered “God will be angry and make him suffer” or “God will angrily punish him.”

The third line, and rain it upon him as his food, is more problematical. The RSV footnote says “in his flesh,” which is the Hebrew text. The expression “in his flesh” as used here is found elsewhere only in Zephaniah 1:17, where RSV translates “flesh” and TEV “dead bodies.” RSV food is obtained by reading a closely similar Hebrew word meaning “bread.” Although many changes have been proposed, that of RSV involves the slightest change in the Hebrew and gives a satisfactory sense in the context. TEV considers line c as saying the same thing as line b and so does not translate it again. This line may also be expressed “and God will cause his anger to come down on him as the food he eats,” or “God’s anger will pour down on him and be his food,” or “he will have God’s anger for his food.” [UBS Handbook Series]

24 **“He may flee from the iron weapon, But the bronze bow will pierce him.**

Psalm 18:34 He trains my hands for battle, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

25 **“It is drawn forth and comes out of his back, Even the glittering point from his gall. Terrors come upon him,**

“Gall” (merō·rā(h)). Only other use in the OT is in 16:13:

(merō·rā(h)): n.fem.; ≡ Str 4846; TWOT 1248f—1. LN 8.9–8.69 gall-bladder, i.e., a membranous muscular sack in which bile (a bitter substance) from the liver is stored (Job 20:25+), note: NIV translates “liver.” [James Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997)]

“Terrors” cf. 18:11). Here the terror of seeing a deadly wound.

Zophar’s vinegar-mouthed diatribe falsely and viciously incriminated Job as a selfish profiteer, heartlessly tyrannizing the poor. Such an arraignment was totally unfounded. [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

26 Complete darkness is held in reserve for his treasures, And unfanned fire will devour him; It will consume the survivor in his tent.

“darkness” = “death” (cf. 18:18). This applies to the destruction of his wealth.

27 “The heavens will reveal his iniquity, And the earth will rise up against him.

For a similar idea of the participation of heaven and earth in legal dispute, compare Deuteronomy 32:1; Isaiah 1:2; Micah 6:1–2. [UBS Handbook Series]

And the earth will rise up against him is probably to be taken in the legal sense of taking the witness stand to testify against someone, and so TEV “earth gives testimony against him,” and NEB “And earth will rise up to condemn him.” The line may be expressed “Even the earth will be like a witness who stands up to testify against him,” or “The earth will be like a witness in court and will say ‘You are guilty!’” [UBS Handbook Series]

28 “The increase of his house will depart; His possessions will flow away in the day of His anger.

The day of God’s wrath (lit. “his” wrath, but God is implied as in v 23) is sometimes the eschatological day of God’s wrath against a nation (Ezek 7:19; 22:24; Lam 1:12; 2:21, 22) but also a day of retribution against an individual (21:30; Prov 11:4), as here. God’s wrath is depicted as an overflowing stream in Isa 30:28, and it is often the subject of verbs for pouring out (e.g., Hos 5:10, like water). [David J. A. Clines]

29 “This is the wicked man’s portion from God, Even the heritage decreed to him by God.”

“Decreed” ==> (nă·ḥălā(h)): n.fem.; ≡ Str 5159; TWOT 1342a—1. LN 57.125–57.141 inheritance, property or land given by one person to a successive generation (Ge 31:34); 2. LN 63.13–63.20 part, share, i.e., that which is a part of a whole, as a portion that has been assigned, implying association (2Sa 20:1). [James Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997)]

cf. 1 Peter 2:8.

Zophar, of course, in his philosophical shortsightedness, made no allowance for a person being afflicted for any reason other than retribution for sin. In his stubborn invective, he flared at Job with venomous words, like the poisonous snake he spoke about. [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

But the implication that Job is suffering this because of his own sin is false. When Jesus Christ suffered and died, the times of happiness he may have enjoyed, perhaps with Mary in childhood, must have felt like a short-lived joy. His life is summed up not as a man of happiness but as 'a man of sorrows . . . acquainted with grief' (Isaiah 53:3). He was cut down in his prime, but for our sin, not his. Job foreshadows this redemptive suffering. those who walk in Jesus' footsteps must expect to experience in some measure this same sadness of happiness cut short in this age." [Ash, 222]

VERSES 21:1-6

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Then Job answered, 2 “Listen carefully to my speech, And let this be your way of consolation. 3 “Bear with me that I may speak; Then after I have spoken, you may mock. 4 “As for me, is my complaint to man? And why should I not be impatient? 5 “Look at me, and be astonished, And put your hand over your mouth. 6 “Even when I remember, I am disturbed, And horror takes hold of my flesh.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 Then Job answered and said: 2 “Keep listening to my words, and let this be your comfort. 3 Bear with me, and I will speak, and after I have spoken, mock on. 4 As for me, is my complaint against man? Why should I not be impatient? 5 Look at me and be appalled, and lay your hand over your mouth. 6 When I remember, I am dismayed, and shuddering seizes my flesh.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Then Job answered: 2 Pay close attention to my words; let this be the consolation you offer. 3 Bear with me while I speak; then after I have spoken, you may continue mocking. 4 As for me, is my complaint against a man? Then why shouldn't I be impatient? 5 Look at me and shudder; put your hand over your mouth. 6 When I think about it, I am terrified and my body trembles in horror.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 Then Job replied: 2 “Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me. 3 Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken, mock on. 4 “Is my complaint directed to a human being? Why should I not be impatient? 5 Look at me and be appalled; clap your hand over your mouth. 6 When I think about this, I am terrified; trembling seizes my body.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Chapter 21 marks the closure of the second cycle of speeches. This means that each speaker has now spoken twice. In this chapter Job replies to the friends about the fate of the wicked, which has been a major topic discussed by all three friends: Eliphaz (15:20–30); Bildad (18:5–21); and Zophar (20:5–29). In their speeches they have used words which they have heard Job use, and have implied that Job is one of the wicked, the people who are doomed. In Job's previous speeches (chapters 16, 17, and 19) he concentrated his attention on his argument with God and his determination to get a fair hearing that would show him to be innocent of wrong-doing. However, in chapter 21 Job shifts the focus of his attention to the assertions of the friends and argues against their teaching. He does this by appealing to the evidence around him, and claims that wicked individuals, instead of suffering the doom the friends claim they must suffer, live happily and die in peace and prosperity. [UBS Handbook Series]

After appealing once more for their understanding and sympathy (Job 21:1–6), Job replied to Zophar’s statements and refuted each of them. Job stated that, from his point of view, it appears that the wicked have long lives (vv. 7–16), they are not often sent calamity (vv. 17–21), and the death of the wicked is no different from the death of other men (vv. 22–34). Point by point, Job took Zophar’s speech and shredded it into bits. [Warren W. Wiersbe]

Chapter 21 is markedly different from all Job’s prior speeches. “It is the only one in which he confines his remarks to his friends and does not fall into either soliloquy or prayer.”^{fn} So far “the friends’ thesis is that sin produces suffering. Their inference is that suffering proves sin. Job denies both.”^{fn} Up to this point, Job has largely ignored the fallacy of their argument, popping their theological balloons only occasionally (9:24; 12:6). Now he is going to butcher and barbecue their sacred cow. [Talbert, 126]

Job follows Zophar’s outline:

1. Who says the wicked die young? (21:7-16)
2. Where is the proof that the godless suffer calamity (21:17-22)
3. Death does not always fall hard on the wicked (21:23-26)

1 Then Job answered, 2 “Listen carefully to my speech, And let this be your way of consolation.

In this speech Job responded to the view of the three arguers (“you” in vv. 2, 27–29, 34 is pl., and the verbs in vv. 2–3a, 5, 29, 34 are pl.) about the destruction of the wicked. [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

The 3 friends are not shouting at each other (surprise). One can picture Job taking a deep breath with a heavy sigh.

Job responded the same way in 13:17.

And let this be your consolation: RSV is misleading in its wording, which sounds as if Job is giving consolation to the friends. Your consolation means “the consolation or comfort which you give me.” In 15:11 Eliphaz claimed to offer Job “the consolations of God.” Job has received no comfort from the friends, but if they will only listen to him, by doing so they will be able to comfort him. This verse may be rendered “Please listen carefully to what I have to say; this is the only comfort I expect from you,” or idiomatically sometimes, “Open your ears for me; then you will be able to help me.” [UBS Handbook Series]

“Consolation” here and in v. 34 frames the chapter. It is the multifaceted Hebrew word *nāḥam* in an unusual noun form that is seen elsewhere only in 15:11.28 With this word the friends came to “comfort” him in 2:11, and with it Job earlier upbraided them with the

epithet “miserable comforters” (16:2). In effect, Job said that the best “comfort” they could give him was simply to listen. [Robert L. Alden]

Job ironically observes that the biggest consolation his friends could offer him would be to say nothing at all. Their speeches defending the doctrine of retribution have made them into “torturer-comforters” (16:2), even though they themselves (or Eliphaz at least) have represented their words as “God’s encouragements” (15:11). [David J. A. Clines, Job 21–37, vol. 18a, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 522]

3 “Bear with me that I may speak; Then after I have spoken, you may mock.

Importance of listening. Something the 3 friends were not adept at doing. Cf. 4:2.

4 “As for me, is my complaint to man? And why should I not be impatient?

I.e. Job’s complaint is with God. “Why should I not be impatient” connects to v. 5.

5 “Look at me, and be astonished, And put your hand over your mouth. 6 “Even when I remember, I am disturbed, And horror takes hold of my flesh.

According to Bildad, people everywhere were horrified at what happens to a wicked person (18:20),

Out of respect for Job the elders in the gate used to “cover their mouths with their hands” (29:9), something he now asked his friends to do (cf. 13:5). In the end (40:4) Job did the same in the presence of God. [Robert L. Alden]

VERSES 21:7-16

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

7 “Why do the wicked still live, Continue on, also become very powerful? 8 “Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes, 9 Their houses are safe from fear, And the rod of God is not on them. 10 “His ox mates without fail; His cow calves and does not abort. 11 “They send forth their little ones like the flock, And their children skip about. 12 “They sing to the timbrel and harp And rejoice at the sound of the flute. 13 “They spend their days in prosperity, And suddenly they go down to Sheol. 14 “They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Your ways. 15 ‘Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, And what would we gain if we entreat Him?’ 16 “Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

7 Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? 8 Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. 9 Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them. 10 Their bull breeds without fail; their cow calves and does not miscarry. 11 They send out their little boys like a flock, and their children dance. 12 They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe. 13 They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. 14 They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. 15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’ 16 Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

7 Why do the wicked continue to live, growing old and becoming powerful? 8 Their children are established while they are still alive, and their descendants, before their eyes. 9 Their homes are secure and free of fear; no rod from God strikes them. 10 Their bulls breed without fail; their cows calve and do not miscarry. 11 They let their little ones run around like lambs; their children skip about, 12 singing to the tambourine and lyre and rejoicing at the sound of the flute. 13 They spend their days in prosperity and go down to Sheol in peace. 14 Yet they say to God: “Leave us alone! We don’t want to know Your ways. 15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, and what will we gain by pleading with Him?” 16 But their prosperity is not of their own doing. The counsel of the wicked is far from me!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

7 Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? 8 They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. 9 Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not on them. 10 Their bulls never fail to breed; their cows calve and do not miscarry. 11 They send forth their children as a flock; their little ones dance about. 12 They sing to the music of timbrel and lyre; they make merry to the sound of the pipe. 13 They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace. 14 Yet they say to God, ‘Leave us alone!

We have no desire to know your ways. 15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?' 16 But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the plans of the wicked.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

7 “Why do the wicked still live, Continue on, also become very powerful?”

Central question. This is the other side of Zophar’s central point in 20:5, “That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary.”

The issue of why the wicked seem to prosper when the righteous suffer. What follows are examples of Job’s thesis (cf. contemporary examples).

Jeremiah 12:1–2 1 Righteous are You, O LORD, that I would plead my case with You; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease? 2 You have planted them, they have also taken root; They grow, they have even produced fruit. You are near to their lips But far from their mind.

8 “Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes,

Job again contradicts the claims made by the friends in 15:33; 18:19; 20:21. Their children are established in their presence: children translates the Hebrew for “seed,” which usually means descendants in the general sense. The two terms translated children in line a and offspring in line b occur in parallel both here and in 5:25. They therefore refer to the same descendants. [UBS Handbook Series]

They live to see their grandchildren. Job had no children at this point. He was contradicting Bildad, who had asserted that the wicked would die childless (18:19).

The friends have of course maintained that the wicked either have no offspring or else lose them: Eliphaz in 15:34 has said that the godless as a group are “sterile”; Bildad in 18:19 has represented the wicked as leaving no posterity; and Zophar in 20:26 has pictured the destruction by fire of the evildoer’s progeny. Job, on the other hand, portrays the wicked as surrounded by his children, who are “established” or “secure” (בִּיטוּחַ; cf. also Prov 12:3; Ps 102:28 [29]). [David J. A. Clines]

9 Their houses are safe from fear, And the rod of God is not on them.

The prosperity of the wicked is a problem which recurs many times in the Old Testament. See Jeremiah 12:1–2; Malachi 3:5; Psalm 73; Habakkuk 1:13.

Note those who were angry with God for what happened to us (and how Ephraim survived with a scratch). Doesn't seem right. Why serve G. when the wicked seem to get better treatment? Importance of an eternal perspective.

Hebrews 12:6–15 6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. 12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. 14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

10 **“His ox mates without fail; His cow calves and does not abort.**

Fertility among livestock was considered a sign of God's blessing (Deut 28:11; Psa 144:13).

Verses 11-12 are parenthetical. Back to children:

11 **“They send forth their little ones like the flock, And their children skip about. 12 “They sing to the timbrel and harp And rejoice at the sound of the flute.**

From children Job again turns to the adults / parents.

13 **“They spend their days in prosperity, And suddenly they go down to Sheol.**

And in peace they go down to Sheol: in peace is literally “in a moment.” The sense is that they die quickly without lingering in illness and suffering. So TEV “and quietly die without suffering.” Go down to Sheol is not a punishment but the expected departure from life as portrayed throughout the Old Testament. Sheol is the place of the dead. It is not thought of as a place of punishment and should not be translated by a word equivalent to “hell.” This line may be rendered, for example, “and when they die they go peacefully to the place of the dead,” or “and they go to the grave in peace,” or “they die in peace and are buried.” [UBS Handbook Series]

14 **“They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Your ways.**

In 22:17 Eliphaz quotes this line almost word for word: 17 “They said to God, ‘Depart from us!’ And ‘What can the Almighty do to them?’

15 ‘Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, And what would we gain if we entreat Him?’

How could the contenders’ viewpoint, especially Zophar’s, be right about the brevity of the wicked’s enjoyment of life (15:29, 32–34; 18:5; 20:5, 8, 22) when Job knew that the wicked live on into ripe old age (cf. 20:10), their children with them, their houses secure (cf. 20:28), seemingly with no judgment from God? (cf. 20:23, 28–29). [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Justice then is not always meted out in this life. Often the godless prosper and the godly perish. “Stern judgment in the life to come is the only possible corrective for this apparent triumph of wickedness. Postmortem retribution is clearly taught in both Testaments—compare Psalm 9:17; Isaiah 5:14–15; 30:33; Ezekiel 32:22–25; Matthew 7:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9—although more clearly in later times than in the age of Job.” [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

16 “Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

Note the translation differences as seen in the NAS / ESV / HCSB:

Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

[ESV]

But their prosperity is not of their own doing. The counsel of the wicked is far from me!

[HCSB]

Interpreters point out that verse 16 is difficult to relate to the wider context. Pope suggests it may be regarded as the protest of someone who was shocked at the idea that the attitude of the wicked was acceptable, and so Pope and others put the verse in brackets. However, the Handbook recommends that translators do as in RSV and TEV.

Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? Dhorme takes the word translated Behold (also in 13:15; 19:7) to transform a statement into a question and translates “Does not their happiness lie in their hands?” FRCL has “Aren’t those people masters of their own happiness?” TEV adds the words “they claim” in order to make a statement rather than a question. GECL renders verse 16 “They believe every man is maker of his own fortune, but their way of thinking is far from mine.”

The counsel of the wicked is far from me: Eliphaz repeats this line in 22:18b. Counsel of the wicked is mentioned in Psalm 1:1. RSV shifts in this line to a statement. Many scholars follow the Septuagint in this line in changing “from me” to “from him”; that is, “far from God.” However, as Rowley points out, Is far from me means that Job refuses the prosperity of the wicked and desires the fellowship with God which he has been denied, and so TEV translates “Their way of thinking I can’t accept.” Verse 16 may also be rendered “These wicked people think they make their own prosperity, but I don’t

accept what they say” or “These people believe they decide their own happiness, but that way of thinking is not what I believe.” [UBS Handbook Series]

At the end of this section Job stepped aside from the position he had been taking and disclaimed any affiliation with those godless words he had just spoken. He believed that “their prosperity” came from God even if they did not acknowledge it. And he distanced³⁶ himself from the kind of “counsel” he had just put into their mouths. [Robert L. Alden]

VERSES 21:17-26

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

17 “How often is the lamp of the wicked put out, Or does their calamity fall on them? Does God apportion destruction in His anger? 18 “Are they as straw before the wind, And like chaff which the storm carries away? 19 “You say, ‘God stores away a man’s iniquity for his sons.’ Let God repay him so that he may know it. 20 “Let his own eyes see his decay, And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21 “For what does he care for his household after him, When the number of his months is cut off? 22 “Can anyone teach God knowledge, In that He judges those on high? 23 “One dies in his full strength, Being wholly at ease and satisfied; 24 His sides are filled out with fat, And the marrow of his bones is moist, 25 While another dies with a bitter soul, Never even tasting anything good. 26 “Together they lie down in the dust, And worms cover them.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

17 “How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out? That their calamity comes upon them? That God distributes pains in his anger? 18 That they are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away? 19 You say, ‘God stores up their iniquity for their children.’ Let him pay it out to them, that they may know it. 20 Let their own eyes see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21 For what do they care for their houses after them, when the number of their months is cut off? 22 Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that he judges those who are on high? 23 One dies in his full vigor, being wholly at ease and secure, 24 his pails full of milk and the marrow of his bones moist. 25 Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of prosperity. 26 They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

17 How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? Does disaster come on them? Does He apportion destruction in His anger? 18 Are they like straw before the wind, like chaff a storm sweeps away? 19 God reserves a person’s punishment for his children. Let God repay the person himself, so that he may know it. 20 Let his own eyes see his demise; let him drink from the Almighty’s wrath! 21 For what does he care about his family once he is dead, when the number of his months has run out? 22 Can anyone teach God knowledge, since He judges the exalted ones? 23 One person dies in excellent health, completely secure and at ease. 24 His body is well fed, and his bones are full of marrow. 25 Yet another person dies with a bitter soul, having never tasted prosperity. 26 But they both lie in the dust, and worms cover them.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

17 “Yet how often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out? How often does calamity come upon them, the fate God allots in his anger? 18 How often are they like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a gale? 19 It is said, ‘God stores up the punishment of the wicked for their children.’ Let him repay the wicked, so that they themselves will experience it! 20 Let their own eyes see their destruction; let them drink the cup of the wrath of the Almighty. 21 For what do they care about the families they leave behind when their allotted months come to an end? 22

“Can anyone teach knowledge to God, since he judges even the highest? 23 One person dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease, 24 well nourished in body, bones rich with marrow. 25 Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having enjoyed anything good. 26 Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

17 “How often is the lamp of the wicked put out, Or does their calamity fall on them? Does God apportion destruction in His anger?”

Assumes a “no!” answer.

In 18:5 Bildad said that the light of the wicked is put out. Job now asks How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out? Job is not asking to know how many times this has happened, but is denying that it happens at all. Lamp of the wicked refers to their physical life. To have their lamp put out is to die prematurely or unexpectedly. Translators may be able to use a similar metaphor for unexpected death; for example, “Is it often that the fire in them grows cold?” If there is no figurative expression, we may express this line, for example, “Does it ever happen that they just fall dead? or” Did you ever see such people die unexpectedly? “As a statement,” They don’t often die prematurely “or” They don’t often die before they are old.” [UBS Handbook Series]

However, what IF the wicked were judged immediately in this life? What would this life be like? What if the righteous were always rewarded? Note the example of Job. Why does a righteous man serve God? Goes back to that supposition. Believers suffer; the wicked prosper. Cf. that there is a principle of sowing and reaping, but this is not absolute. Cf. 21:23. Also time for repentance, 2 Peter 3:9.

The first line contradicts Bildad’s statement in 18:5 that “the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.” The phrase speaks of a sudden death. But even while alive they are seldom the victims of “calamity.” [Robert L. Alden]

18 “Are they as straw before the wind, And like chaff which the storm carries away?”

Cf. Psalm 1:4 where the same words are used.

The term for straw (גִּבְתָּה) refers to the chopped pieces of straw used as fodder, and in Exod 5:7–18 for reinforcing bricks; elsewhere in metaphorical contexts it represents what is weak (41:19 [27]) or what is worthless (Jer 23:28). Chaff (קֶשֶׂא) is finer still, the dust of straw left behind on the threshing floor, a symbol of what is insubstantial and fleeting (cf. 13:25; Isa 17:13; Jer 13:24; Ps 35:5; etc.; see also Note on 41:28). [David J. A. Clines]

19 “You say, ‘God stores away a man’s iniquity for his sons.’ Let God repay him so that he may know it.

You say ‘God stores up their iniquity for their sons’: the words You say are not in Hebrew; they are supplied on the basis that Job is replying to an objection the friends may raise. The principle of children suffering for the sins of their parents is found in Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9. In 5:4 and 20:10 the friends spoke of the inheritance of suffering the wicked parent leaves for his children. Jeremiah (31:29 ff.) and Ezekiel (18:2 ff.) both reject the view that the sins of the parents cause their children to suffer. Compare also Matthew 27:25. [UBS Handbook Series]

Let him recompense it to themselves, that they may know it: the wording of RSV is awkward and the meaning unclear. The Hebrew has only three words which translate literally “He repays him and he knows (it).” This line anticipates the friends’ objection and is explained further by verse 20. The form of the verb translated recompense means “punish, carry out reprisals,” and so means “Let him (God) punish him (the wicked person) himself.” Know it is to be understood in the sense of “learn from it, profit from it.” The final clause can be “so that they learn from it. [UBS Handbook Series]

Once the wrongdoer is dead he does not even know what is happening to his children (cf. 14:21–22), so their suffering can be no punishment for him. Justice demands that the person who has committed wrong be personally punished for it. [David J. A. Clines]

Scripture makes it clear that the fathers are not punished for the sins of the children or the children for the sins of the fathers (Jer. 31:29–30; Ezek. 18:1ff). Certainly parents may be deeply hurt by the sins of their children, and children may suffer from the consequences of their parents’ sins, but the judgment of God is always just (Deut. 24:16). It was cruel for the three friends to suggest that Job’s sins had caused the death of his children. [Warren W. Wiersbe]

But if God doesn’t judge the wicked, He will judge their children (Job 21:19). Zophar had argued that point (20:10), and so had Eliphaz (5:4). Of course, both of them were aiming at Job, who had lost all of his children. “But what kind of judgment is that?” asked Job. “If a man lives in sin, let him suffer for his sin. After he dies, why should he care about what happens to his family? In Sheol, he will never know what is happening on earth.”

20 “Let his own eyes see his decay, And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21 “For what does he care for his household after him, When the number of his months is cut off?”

For what do they care for their houses after them? Here Job is asking “What interest, concern, does a dead man take in the affairs of his family?” Whether his children are happy or punished makes little difference because his life is over. In 14:21 Job said “His sons come to honor and he does not know it,” because he is dead. [UBS Handbook Series]

One of the signs of consummate selfishness and wickedness would be not to care for the world or the family left behind. King Hezekiah evidenced it when, after Isaiah's rebuke and announcement of future exile, he said in effect, What do I care since I'll be gone when the invasion comes? (Isa 39:8). As long as the punishment did not affect the guilty but fell on the successive generations, people would sin wantonly. Ezekiel denounced that viewpoint and announced, "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek 18:4). That is not good news for sinners. [Robert L. Alden]

22 "Can anyone teach God knowledge, In that He judges those on high? 23 "One dies in his full strength, Being wholly at ease and satisfied; 24 His sides are filled out with fat, And the marrow of his bones is moist, 25 While another dies with a bitter soul, Never even tasting anything good. 26 "Together they lie down in the dust, And worms cover them.

Will any teach God knowledge: some interpreters consider this verse to be a comment added later by someone objecting to the criticism of God's actions in verse 19. Tur-Sinai believes that Job is here expressing an objection of the friends. Dhorme, on the other hand, argues that Job is scolding the friends for imposing on God their own traditional teachings. According to the friends any lack of morality results automatically in physical suffering and death. But from verse 23 Job asserts that death happens to all alike, and so men should not try to teach God. Teach God knowledge is the literal form. God who has all knowledge cannot be given more by humans. NJB translates "But who can teach wisdom to God?" Use of the term "wisdom" or knowledge is redundant in English, and so TEV and others say "Can a man teach God?" This line may be rendered as a negative statement, "Men cannot teach God" or "People cannot give their knowledge to God."

Seeing that he judges those that are on high: this line explains why people cannot teach God. Those that are on high translates a single word in Hebrew, sometimes rendered "the exalted." Translators differ as to who these are. TEV "those in high places" refers to powerful people, rulers. NEB has "those in heaven above," and FRCL "angels." NJB "those on high" seems to be purposefully ambiguous. NJV takes on high to refer to the place of God, thus translating "he who judges from such heights." The reference is most probably to the heavenly council and echoes 16:19, Job's "heavenly witness." Since God controls the heavenly beings, he is no doubt capable of governing earth without being instructed by human beings. [UBS Handbook Series]

Worms are indifferent to the status of their prey.

There is a difference in how believers and non-believers die. Cf. Wesley; Last Words of Saints and Sinners (Lockyer); example of Dick Norwood. This doesn't mean that believers always die well, per se.

God is true knowledge / logic.

VERSES 21:27-34

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

27 “Behold, I know your thoughts, And the plans by which you would wrong me. 28 “For you say, ‘Where is the house of the nobleman, And where is the tent, the dwelling places of the wicked?’ 29 “Have you not asked wayfaring men, And do you not recognize their witness? 30 “For the wicked is reserved for the day of calamity; They will be led forth at the day of fury. 31 “Who will confront him with his actions, And who will repay him for what he has done? 32 “While he is carried to the grave, Men will keep watch over his tomb. 33 “The clods of the valley will gently cover him; Moreover, all men will follow after him, While countless ones go before him. 34 “How then will you vainly comfort me, For your answers remain full of falsehood?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

27 “Behold, I know your thoughts and your schemes to wrong me. 28 For you say, ‘Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?’ 29 Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony 30 that the evil man is spared in the day of calamity, that he is rescued in the day of wrath? 31 Who declares his way to his face, and who repays him for what he has done? 32 When he is carried to the grave, watch is kept over his tomb. 33 The clods of the valley are sweet to him; all mankind follows after him, and those who go before him are innumerable. 34 How then will you comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

27 I know your thoughts very well, the schemes you would wrong me with. 28 For you say, “Where now is the nobleman’s house?” and “Where are the tents the wicked lived in?” 29 Have you never consulted those who travel the roads? Don’t you accept their reports? 30 Indeed, the evil man is spared from the day of disaster, rescued from the day of wrath. 31 Who would denounce his behavior to his face? Who would repay him for what he has done? 32 He is carried to the grave, and someone keeps watch over his tomb. 33 The dirt on his grave is sweet to him. Everyone follows behind him, and those who go before him are without number. 34 So how can you offer me such futile comfort? Your answers are deceptive.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

27 “I know full well what you are thinking, the schemes by which you would wrong me. 28 You say, ‘Where now is the house of the great, the tents where the wicked lived?’ 29 Have you never questioned those who travel? Have you paid no regard to their accounts— 30 that the wicked are spared from the day of calamity, that they are delivered from the day of wrath? 31 Who denounces their conduct to their face? Who repays them for what they have done? 32 They are carried to the grave, and watch is kept over their tombs. 33 The soil in the valley is sweet to them; everyone follows after them, and a countless throng goes before them. 34 “So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

27 **“Behold, I know your thoughts, And the plans by which you would wrong me. 28 “For you say, ‘Where is the house of the nobleman, And where is the tent, the dwelling places of the wicked?’**

Job frames the argument of the three friends. Cf. the imagery of Bildad in chapter 18 (cf. 18:17-20). Sounds like a summation of the what the friend’s have said so far.

29 **“Have you not asked wayfaring men, And do you not recognize their witness? 30 “For the wicked is reserved for the day of calamity; They will be led forth at the day of fury.**

Verse 30 is confusing and better rendered by the ESV and others.

Job answers the question which he assumed the friends have asked, by asking another question which he then goes on to answer himself. He advised them to note what experienced travelers have said as evidence of what he himself believes to be true to experience. In 15:17–19 Eliphaz would show Job the truth that was fixed before any foreigner entered. Job, by contrast, appeals to them to widen their knowledge from the perspective of people such as travelers who have seen foreign places.

Have you not asked those who travel the roads: this thought is expressed in Psalm 80:12; 89:41; Lamentations 1:12; 2:15; Proverbs 9:15. This line may also be expressed “Have you never asked people who travel” or “You can learn from travelers.”

And do you not accept their testimony: testimony translates a word meaning “sign or mark.” Dhorme suggests that these travelers were laborers and tramps who moved from town to town and wrote down their names and occasional thoughts on small signs which they left at cross roads, and so Job is thought to be asking if the friends have not seen these “signs.” Although interesting, this picture is not very likely because the testimonies or “signs” Job refers to are detailed abstract thoughts concerning the fate of the wicked. Therefore it seems more likely that Job has in mind people such as merchants, astrologers, and others who would travel widely and speak about the strange things they witnessed in far away places. This is in line with TEV “The reports they bring back.” Verse 29 may also be rendered “Have you never talked with people who travel to other places, and do you not believe what they tell?” or “You should talk with people who travel and come back with their reports.”

That the wicked man is spared in the day of calamity: verse 30 is the testimony that can be obtained from travelers who support Job’s claim “that when misfortune strikes, the wicked person escapes unhurt.” So Job contradicts the friends’ teaching of retribution, being punished for evil. The verb translated spare can mean “to restrain or check” as in 7:11; 16:5–6, and so KJV says “reserved to the day.” However, this is not the sense in verse 30, which has the same meaning as in 38:23 and may be translated spared as in RSV and TEV. Day of calamity refers to a time when many people, or a whole community, experience disaster or misfortune. God is not mentioned in this line but is

clearly implied, and so TEV has “on the day God is angry and punishes.” FRCL avoids “the day” and translates “The anger of God leaves him safe and sound.” It is important that verse 30 be translated as the content of the travelers’ reports from verse 29; for example, “Those travelers show that nothing happens to the wicked person when God is angry and punishes other people” or “... that wicked people escape God’s angry punishment.”

That he is rescued in the day of wrath: rescued is literally “led forth.” Although various changes in the Hebrew text have been proposed, RSV rescued is a good rendering of the basic meaning and appropriate for the context. Line b means essentially the same as line a and is without poetic heightening, intensity, or focusing. [UBS Handbook Series]

T/wicked is reserved for calamity and judgment!? That’s what Zophar has just been arguing. Is Job agreeing with him now? All along Job has argued that t/wicked live long, pleasurable lives.

The problem is the word t/NAS translates “reserved” [^]

3104 חָשַׁק (ḥā·šāk): v.; ≡ Str 2820; TWOT 765—1. LN 68.34–68.57 (qal) keep back, to withhold, restrain, halt, i.e., stop an action from occurring (Ge 22:12); 2. LN 21.17–21.24 (qal) spare, i.e., cause to be free from danger (Ps 78:50); 3. LN 22.35–22.37 (qal) bring relief, i.e., have a favorable circumstance, and so not be in a state of trouble or pain (Job 16:5); (nif) relieved (Job 16:6; 21:30+), note: for NIV text in Eze 30:18, see 3124. [James Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997)]

Same word is used in Job 16:5 where it’s used in the sense of relief.

This isn’t ==>

30a “. . . the wicked . . . reserved for the day of calamity . . .

It’s 30a “. . . the wicked . . . withheld from the day of calamity . . .

**31 “Who will confront him with his actions, And who will repay him for what he has done?
32 “While he is carried to the grave, Men will keep watch over his tomb. 33 “The clods of the valley will gently cover him; Moreover, all men will follow after him, While countless ones go before him.**

Note the philosophical necessity of judgment. We assume this. The depraved kills his family then kills himself. Did he escape judgement? We see this as unfair.

Job said he was aware of how they might try to answer him. They would ask Job to point out where ... wicked wealthy people were living (cf. 8:22; 18:21; 20:28). Job answered this anticipated question with another question: Had the three contestants ever questioned travelers? Many people who travel have money and yet many of them, though evil, do not face calamity or wrath. No one dares denounce or confront wicked, influential people or requite them. Such a popular person lives on, and even has an honorable burial,

with people guarding his tomb after a crowd follows his casket in the funeral procession. [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

No one these days wants a doctrine of retribution as simplistic as that advocated by Job's friends, but what Job puts in its place is scary. If Job is right, there is no moral order at all and your moral behavior or otherwise will have no effect on your well-being. This is the challenge Job's speech brings, not just to the religious believer, but to any person with moral values. Inculcated in all of us is the belief that certain behavior is not just right in itself but beneficial, and even that the rewards that certain moral behavior entails constitute some kind of authentication of the value of that behavior. If Job is correct, there is indeed a right and a wrong, but no one should imagine that doing the right and eschewing the wrong is going to yield any benefit; if anything, it is wrongdoing that yields the greatest benefits. [David J. A. Clines]

34 **“How then will you vainly comfort me, For your answers remain full of falsehood?”**

Their consoling (cf. v. 2), Job evaluated, was only nonsense (*hebel*, “empty, futile, useless”; cf. “no meaning” in 7:16 and comments on Ecc. 1:2) and were evidence of their being faithless (*mā'al*, “unfaithful, treacherous”). Job simply could not buy their explanation of suffering; in fact their viewpoint meant they were unfaithful to him, their longtime friend. [The Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Robert Gordis observes of the final word “falsehood” (*ma'al*) that “It is a priestly term occurring in the Priestly Code, Ezek. and Chronicles . . . in the meaning of ‘violation of a sacred object’ . . . Here, Job declares the Friend's answers to be an act of faithlessness against the truth and by that token against God.” [cited in Janzen, 157]