

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):

Job 23 1 Then Job replied, 2 “Even today my complaint is rebellion; His hand is heavy despite my groaning. 3 “Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat! 4 “I would present my case before Him And fill my mouth with arguments. 5 “I would learn the words which He would answer, And perceive what He would say to me. 6 “Would He contend with me by the greatness of His power? No, surely He would pay attention to me. 7 “There the upright would reason with Him; And I would be delivered forever from my Judge. 8 “Behold, I go forward but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; 9 When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him. 10 “But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. 11 “My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside. 12 “I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. 13 “But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. 14 “For He performs what is appointed for me, And many such decrees are with Him. 15 “Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; When I consider, I am terrified of Him. 16 “It is God who has made my heart faint, And the Almighty who has dismayed me, 17 But I am not silenced by the darkness, Nor deep gloom which covers me.

Job 24 1 “Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, And why do those who know Him not see His days? 2 “Some remove the landmarks; They seize and devour flocks. 3 “They drive away the donkeys of the orphans; They take the widow’s ox for a pledge. 4 “They push the needy aside from the road; The poor of the land are made to hide themselves altogether. 5 “Behold, as wild donkeys in the wilderness They go forth seeking food in their activity, As bread for their children in the desert. 6 “They harvest their fodder in the field And glean the vineyard of the wicked. 7 “They spend the night naked, without clothing, And have no covering against the cold. 8 “They are wet with the mountain rains And hug the rock for want of a shelter. 9 “Others snatch the orphan from the breast, And against the poor they take a pledge. 10 “They cause the poor to go about naked without clothing, And they take away the sheaves from the hungry. 11 “Within the walls they produce oil; They tread wine presses but thirst. 12 “From the city men groan, And the souls of the wounded cry out; Yet God does not pay attention to folly. 13 “Others have been with those who rebel against the light; They do not want to know its ways Nor abide in its paths. 14 “The murderer arises at dawn; He kills the poor and the needy, And at night he is as a thief. 15 “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Saying, ‘No eye will see me.’ And he disguises his face. 16 “In the dark they dig into houses, They shut themselves up by day; They do not know the light. 17 “For the morning is the same to him as thick darkness, For he is familiar with the terrors of thick darkness. 18 “They are insignificant on the surface of the water; Their portion is cursed on the earth. They do not turn toward the vineyards. 19 “Drought and heat consume the snow waters, So does Sheol those who have sinned. 20 “A mother will forget him; The worm feeds sweetly till he is no longer remembered. And wickedness will be broken like a tree. 21 “He wrongs the barren woman And does no good for the widow. 22 “But He drags off the valiant by His power; He rises, but no one has assurance of life. 23 “He provides them with security, and they are supported; And His eyes are on their ways. 24 “They are exalted a little while, then they are gone; Moreover, they are brought low and like everything gathered up; Even like the heads of

grain they are cut off. 25 “Now if it is not so, who can prove me a liar, And make my speech worthless?”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

Bible Knowledge Commentary

I. JOB'S THIRD REPLY TO ELIPHAZ (23–24)

- A. Job's desire to find God (23:1–9)
- B. Job's declaration of innocence (23:10–12)
- C. Job's exacerbation with God's sovereignty (23:13–17)
- D. Job's concern over God's indifference (24:1–17)
- E. Job's certainty over the wicked's eventual punishment (24:18–25)

UBS Handbook Series

I. Job Replies (Job 23:1–24:25)

- A. God Would Listen to Job If Job Knew Where to Find Him (23:1–7)
- B. Job Has Searched Everywhere for God (23:8–12)
- C. Job Believes God Has a Plan for Him (23:13–17)
- D. Job Complains That Evil Men Exploit the Poor (24:1–12)
- E. Job Describes the Crimes of Evil Men Carried out Under Cover of Darkness (24:13–17)
- F. The Fate of the Wicked and God's Judgment Described (24:18–25)

The Outline Bible

II. Job's Defense (23:1–24:25) - Job begins to respond less to Eliphaz and more to directly to God Himself

- A. Where can I Find God? (23:1–9)
 - 1. Job longs to find God and plead his case before Him
- B. Tested Like Gold (23:10–12)
 - 1. Job is certain that he will be found innocent after he endures his trials like gold in a refining fire
- C. God will do as He Pleases (23:13–17)
 - 1. Job acknowledges that God's decree concerning his life will be carried out regardless
- D. Why aren't the Ungodly Judged? (24:1–17)
 - 1. Job cannot understand why God allows the unrighteous to go unpunished
- E. Fallen in a Flash and Forgotten (24:18–25)
 - 1. Job admits that the wicked do not last long

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

I. Job: Innocent but Frustrated with God's Apathy (23:1–24:25)

- A. Longing (23:1–9)
 - 1. He Wishes He Could Find God (23:1–7)
 - 2. He Cannot Find God (23:8–9)
- B. Job Declares His Innocence (23:10–12)

- C. Frustration at God's Apathy (23:13–24:17)
 - 1. God's Total Control of the Case (23:13–24:1)
 - 2. The Unpunished Wicked (24:2–17)
 - a. Their Oppression of the Poor (24:2–12)
 - b. Killers, Adulterers, Burglars (24:13–17)
- D. The Accursed Wicked (24:18–25)

Be Patient: Job (Warren W. Wiersbe)

- I. Three false accusations (Job 22:1–30)
 - A. Job is a sinner (Job 22:1–11)
 - B. Job is hiding his sins (Job 22:12–20)
 - C. Job must repent of his sins (Job 22:21–30).
- II. Three bitter complaints (Job 23–24)
 - A. “God is hiding from me” (Job 23:1–12)
 - B. “God is frightening me” (Job 23:13–17)
 - C. “God perplexes me” (Job 24:1–25)
 - 1. Injustices in the country (vv. 1–11)
 - 2. Crimes in the city (vv. 12–17)
 - 3. A curse on the wicked (vv. 18–25)

BASIC OUTLINE:

- I. Job Cannot Find God (23:1–9)
- II. Job Declares His Innocence (23:10–12)
- III. Job is Alarmed by God’s Sovereignty (23:13–17)
- IV. Job is Dismayed at the Triumph of Wickedness (24:1–17)
- V. Job Believes Righteousness will Eventually Prevail (24:18-25)

SERMON OUTLINE:

- I. Job Believes He Cannot Find God (23:1–9) - Will I Trust God when I Don’t Perceive Him?
 - A. For Job - God is Absent
- II. Job Believes He is Innocent (23:10–12) - Will I Trust God when Life Seems Unfair?
 - A. Job's Declaration of Innocence
 1. Throughout the book so far we’ve seen two things:
 - a. Job is innocent (he did nothing to deserve his calamity)
 - b. 3 friends assume he’s guilty (his calamity must be result of his sin)
 2. Job knows he didn’t commit crimes that caused his calamity
 - a. He knows that based on 2 things: God’s knowledge & his own
- III. Job Believes God’s Sovereignty is Capricious (23:13–17) - Will I Trust God in His Wise Sovereignty?
 - A. We see an accurate portrayal of God’s sovereignty in vv.13-14
 - B. But for Job - God’s sovereignty seemed capricious
- IV. Job Believes the Wicked Triumph (24:1–17) - Will I Trust God when Evil Triumphs?
 - A. Job asks a question followed by several examples that he thinks prove his point
 1. Question is in verse 1
 2. Job gives a few common examples of these crimes in vv. 2-17
 - a. The godless are driven by greed (v. 2)
 - b. The godless exploit the vulnerable (vv. 3-11)
 - (1) Primary target was widows and orphans
 - (2) Secondary target: the poor - which included widows and orphans (vv. 4-8)
 - (3) Unfair labor practices including child abuse (vv. 9-11)
 - c. The afflicted cry out - but to deaf ears! (v. 12)
 3. Verses 13–16 give further examples of what godlessness looks like
 - a. Verses 13-16 are all triplets with a common theme of darkness as wickedness and light as righteousness
 - (1) Verse 13 forms a heading
 - (a) Murderers and thieves (14)
 - (b) Adulterers (15)
 - (2) Common theme of Darkness and Light in Scripture

V. Job Believes Righteousness will Eventually Prevail (24:18-25) - Will I Trust God in His Timing?

A. These last 8 verses are widely contested by scholars

1. Big question is, "Who's speaking in these verses?"

a. Three basic options

(1) Job is quoting the three friends ("This is what you said")

(2) This is one of the 3 friends directly speaking

(3) This is Job continuing to speak

B. Exposition

Closing Thoughts . . .

1. God's Justice Delayed Demonstrates His Mercy

2. God is Never Absent Regardless of How you Feel

3. Life may be unfair but that does not mean that God is.

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): Job cannot find God.

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about): who seems unconcerned about those who needlessly suffer.

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): Job cannot find God who seems unconcerned about those who needlessly suffer.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON:

* God appears AWOL when He's needed most.

* God is there even when He seems not.

* Life is unfair and God seems not to care.

* Trust and obey for there IS no other way.

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: When Life is Unfair and God Seems not to Care

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Job's Seventh Speech (Job 23–24). Job rejects Eliphaz's counsel. He refuses to compromise his integrity by contriving repentance when he knows he is innocent. In these two chapters we see much of what was said in earlier speeches: bitterness, complaints about injustice against the righteous, and Job's consistent declaration of innocence. [Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 23–24]

Chapters 23 and 24 contain Job's seventh speech, in which he does not reply to Eliphaz's speech in chapter 22 but rather takes up his own agenda. The major theme of chapter 23 is Job's complaint that he cannot find God and therefore is unable to present his case to him. Job's moods in this chapter are arranged in an alternating series of negative and positive outlooks. In verses 2–5 Job complains against God and his inability to find God. In verses 6–7 Job's attitude changes, and he feels that God would listen to his case and declare him innocent. However, with verses 8–9 Job is again hopelessly looking about for God. In verses 10–12 the positive attitude again comes to the surface as Job expresses confidence in God and himself. But finally Job's feeling in verses 13–17 is very low as he admits that God terrifies him. [William David Reayburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 429]

As to the number of the speeches given by Job, sometimes I see commentators refer to this as his seventh, most as his eighth. Job's Seventh Speech (Job 23–24); Job's Eighth Speech (Job 26–31).

Note the resumed emphasis on a courtroom setting.

Scholars generally agree that chapter 24 is the most difficult part of the entire book. The problems are ones of form as well as content, and even the relevance of the material to the rest of the poem. As to its form, it has more three-line verses than any other chapter. The text itself is obscure at more points, and HOTTTP has comments on 12 verses. [UBS Handbook Series]

Job ignored everything that Eliphaz said and launched into the themes that characterize his speeches. In this two-chapter response he again expressed his yearning for an audience with God and complained at his lack of success in that endeavor. He protested God's apparent apathy while describing in some detail all the crimes that sinners commit without incrimination. In chaps. 23–24 there is one glimmer of hope (23:10) but no discourse on the greatness of the Creator. [Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 239]

A more liberal as to the speaker and order of the verses is taken by D. Clines:

The integrity of this speech, as also of the remainder of the third cycle of the dialogue, is open to question. Together with most commentators, I regard 24:18–24 as not properly

part of this speech but wrongly transposed to this place during the course of the transmission of the text (against, e.g., D. Wolfers, "The Speech-Cycles in the Book of Job," VT 43 [1993] 385–402). The order of the verses in chap. 24 has also been thought by many to have been damaged; in this commentary, however, only two changes have been adopted: (1) the transposition of v 14c to follow v 15, and (2) the assignment of vv 18–24 to Zophar, probably to follow 27:17. [David J. A. Clines, Job 21–37, vol. 18a, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 589]

While not outside the realm of possibility, I see this as a strained attempt for an assumed cohesiveness that need not be there.

The genre of the speech is a complaint (as against Murphy, 35, who regards it as a disputation speech, while acknowledging that "the tone is more reflective and less polemical than usual"). Like chap. 3, this is a soliloquy, addressed neither to God nor to the friends. It expresses in its first half Job's longing for a personal encounter with God, using the form of the wish, "who will grant that ...?" (23:3), and in its second half Job's complaint that God does not give the wicked the punishment they deserve, using the form of the rhetorical question, "Why are days of assize not kept by the Almighty?" (24:1). [Word Biblical Commentary]

"Job's first utterance after his calamity (chap. 3) took the form of a soliloquy. Even in his second speech he turned directly to the friends only at 6:14. From then on, however, each of Job's responses has opened with a direct reference to what they have been saying to him, characterized with sarcasm or irony. Now, in chapters 23-24, Job begins to turn away from them. Addressing them only obliquely, and returning largely to interior dialogue. Even God no longer is addressed directly in the second person, as Job enters more deeply into the solitariness of his situation." [Jansen, 164-65]

VERSES 23:1-9

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Then Job replied, 2 “Even today my complaint is rebellion; His hand is heavy despite my groaning. 3 “Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat! 4 “I would present my case before Him And fill my mouth with arguments. 5 “I would learn the words which He would answer, And perceive what He would say to me. 6 “Would He contend with me by the greatness of His power? No, surely He would pay attention to me. 7 “There the upright would reason with Him; And I would be delivered forever from my Judge. 8 “Behold, I go forward but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; 9 When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 Then Job answered and said: 2 “Today also my complaint is bitter; my hand is heavy on account of my groaning. 3 Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! 4 I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. 5 I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me. 6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would pay attention to me. 7 There an upright man could argue with him, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge. 8 “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; 9 on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Then Job answered: 2 Today also my complaint is bitter. His hand is heavy despite my groaning. 3 If only I knew how to find Him, so that I could go to His throne. 4 I would plead my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. 5 I would learn how He would answer me; and understand what He would say to me. 6 Would He prosecute me forcefully? No, He will certainly pay attention to me. 7 Then an upright man could reason with Him, and I would escape from my Judge forever. 8 If I go east, He is not there, and if I go west, I cannot perceive Him. 9 When He is at work to the north, I cannot see Him; when He turns south, I cannot find Him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 Then Job replied: 2 “Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. 3 If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! 4 I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. 5 I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say to me. 6 Would he vigorously oppose me? No, he would not press charges against me. 7 There the upright can establish their innocence before him, and there I would be delivered forever from my judge. 8 “But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. 9 When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

A. Job's desire to find God (23:1–9)

I like the UBS Handbook heading for vv. 1-7: “God Would Listen to Job If Job Knew Where to Find Him”

1 **Then Job replied,**

Replied refers to a general reply. (“Then Job spoke,”) Job does not address Eliphaz directly:

Job ignored everything that Eliphaz said and launched into the themes that characterize his speeches. In this two-chapter response he again expressed his yearning for an audience with God and complained at his lack of success in that endeavor. He protested God’s apparent apathy while describing in some detail all the crimes that sinners commit without incrimination. In chaps. 23–24 there is one glimmer of hope (23:10) but no discourse on the greatness of the Creator. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 239]

2 **“Even today my complaint is rebellion; His hand is heavy despite my groaning.**

Job’s bitter complaint:

In his bitterness (the fourth of five times he spoke of it; cf. 3:20; 7:11; 10:1; 27:2) and groaning Job still sensed that God’s hand of affliction was weighing him down (cf. 13:21; 33:7). [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), 746]

On “groaning” or “sighing” (אננה), see on 3:24, where it is his daily bread.

3 **“Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat!**

Job in 13:24 “Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy?”

Like 6:8; 11:5; 14:13; 19:23, Job longs to know where he might find God. How do you address an opponent who is not there? When heaven is as brass.

4 **“I would present my case before Him And fill my mouth with arguments.**

“Present” = “spread out” as in presenting a legal case. “God cannot be compelled to court, so Job has recognized already (9:19).” [Word Biblical Commentary]

5 **“I would learn the words which He would answer, And perceive what He would say to me. 6 “Would He contend with me by the greatness of His power? No, surely He would pay**

attention to me. 7 “There the upright would reason with Him; And I would be delivered forever from my Judge.

Job certainly wanted to turn to God (as each debater had advised, 5:8; 8:5; 11:13; 22:23), but he could not find Him (cf. 13:24). If God could be found then Job would present his case (23:4, *mišpot*, another court term used frequently in the Book of Job), arguing persuasively (cf. 10:2) and weighing God’s reply (23:5). Faced with the facts of Job’s innocence, God would no longer oppose Job with His awesome power or press charges (*rīb*, lit., “contend, or bring a court litigation”) against him. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Verse 7, “upright,” cf. 1:1.

Job seems more optimistic here as to a legal hearing before God. But note 9:19, “If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one! And if it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him?”

But Job cannot find God anyway:

8 “Behold, I go forward but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; 9 When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him.

When God is silent . . . Cf. Psalm 10:1 - Psalm 10:1 “Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?”

Job’s spacial observations parallel the four points of a compass (NSEW). Merism.

Of course, Job nor any man, can search everywhere. Issue of a universal negative.

VERSES 23:10-12

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

10 “But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. 11 “My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside. 12 “I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold. 11 My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside. 12 I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

10 Yet He knows the way I have taken; when He has tested me, I will emerge as pure gold. 11 My feet have followed in His tracks; I have kept to His way and not turned aside. 12 I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily food.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. 11 My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. 12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

B. Job's declaration of innocence (23:10–12)

10 **“But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.**

10a = Job can't find God, but God finds him.

10b (cf. 22:24-25) =

When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold: tried translates the same verb used in 7:18 “and test him every moment,” where it refers to God testing Job’s faithfulness. See 7:18 for discussion. TEV has dropped the simile as gold and gives instead the sense of the simile, with “... find me pure.” For this kind of testing compare Zechariah 13:9 “I will ... test them as gold is tested.” [UBS Handbook Series]

This statement of faith has lent strength to believers through the ages as they passed through fires of tribulation and trial. John Rippon's "How Firm a Foundation" contains a fine commentary on Job 23:10.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

There are three noteworthy items of faith here: (1) Job believed that God knew his situation; (2) Job believed that God was testing him; (3) Job believed that he would emerge a better man. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary]

Cf. Clines for an opposing view.

Some people go into the furnace of affliction, and it burns them; others go in, and the experience purifies them. What makes the difference? Their attitude toward the Word of God and the will of God. If we are nourished by the Word and submit to His will, the furnace experience, painful as it may be, will refine us and make us better. But if we resist God's will and fail to feed on His truth, the furnace experience will only burn us and make us bitter. [Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Patient, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 95]

A vision of Job's "royalty" restored in the future (so Janzen)? Cf. 19:9 "He has stripped my honor from me, and removed the crown from my head.

God, the divine Alchemist.

"Job maintained an unshakable faith in God, a confidence in His sovereign control over all his experiences, and a belief that he would someday see and hear God for himself. But nowhere does Job express any inkling that his circumstances are only a temporary hardship through which he will pass perfected and purified. To take 23:10 in that way is to make it a schizophrenic exception to Job's unwavering attitude throughout the book. . . . God has simply turned against him for unknown reasons . . . Job is not saying, 'God knows what I am going through, and when He is done testing me, I will be the better for it, purified like gold.' He is saying, 'God sees me and knows me. He knows I am innocent. When he tests me . . . I will come through like gold.' Not because the process will purify him but because he is already 'gold'—innocent, blameless, righteous—as he has been claiming throughout the book." [Talbert, 140-41]

Cf. the quote above in the context of a court hearing. Job will be declared "not guilty." Therefore, there are two perspectives on this verse: 1) Job's seeing his calamity as being unnecessary and undeserved; 2) Our seeing his trials / ours as a purifying agent unto Christlikeness.

1 Peter 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

11 “My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside. 12 “I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

Finishing with Job’s trial in court may be the meaning of verse 10, rather than the more common view that God was putting him through a test so that he would be more pure than before. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

I find these verses convicting . . . Note the sins of omission and commission that Job claims to have avoided in his responses throughout the book (esp. in chapter 31).

The wisdom literature often speaks of life as a road and behavior as a way or path (e.g., Pss 1:1, 6; 119:105; Prov 9:9; 10:9). We do not know how much Job understood about God’s “steps” and “way” or how he had encountered God’s “commands” or “the words of his mouth” (v. 12), since he was removed by both time and distance from the law of Moses. In 31:4–40 Job would delineate his understanding of the wicked path—falsehood, adultery, injustice, greed, lack of compassion, materialism, idolatry, refusing hospitality, hypocrisy, and oppression. Such a list reflects the conduct condemned in the rest of Scripture. [New American Commentary]

How did God communicate his “words” to Job in this pre-mosaic era? Time of Abraham? Note that the law is written on men’s hearts via the imago dei (Romans 2:15).

“We know from the Genesis record of the prepatriarchal and patriarchal period (from creation to the time of Moses—during which the story of Job occurred—that God regularly communicated truth about Himself to man through a variety of media: dreams, visions, and at times (apparently) even direct speech. This revelation included more than individual directives (e.g., Gen. 22:1ff.) God’s revelation in this era is described as ‘the way of the Lord’ in which Abraham would rear his children (Gen. 18:19), and even as the ‘charge . . . commandments . . . statutes and . . . laws’ that God gave to Abraham (Gen. 26:5), five centuries before Moses ever wrote anything. Whether such revelations were ever written down we have no way of knowing. What is clear is that in very generation God has not left Himself without witness (Acts 14:17). And every generation is accountable according to the degree of witness God has left them.” [Talbert, 143]

From the metaphor of walking on right roads, Job moved to the theme of obeying God’s spoken words. “My daily bread” is the noun (ḥōq) that usually means “statute/decreed” (cf. v. 14). It is taken by many (KJV, NASB, NIV, NJPS) in the sense “my portion [of food] appointed to me” (Gen 47:22; Prov 30:8; 31:15). Others follow the Greek and Latin versions and adjust the vowels to read “in my bosom” (RSV, AB, BHSfootnote), sometimes paraphrased as “in my heart” (NAB, NEB, AAT; cf. 19:27; Ps 119:11).³⁴

Such a change commends itself since the “daily bread” translation relies on a less common meaning of the noun and introduces into the text a new idea that has no parallel. [New American Commentary]

Why do we feel as such “worms” cf. to Job? Note the doctrine of depravity which we have a better understanding of, and the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing our sin.

How does my life match up against God’s Word?

Note the challenges we face that Job did not: Media; scantily-clad women; entertainment driven culture; etc.

10–14 The train of thought seems to be this: Despite my desire to find God and present my case to him (vv 3–7), I am unable to find him (vv 8–9). And he is elusive just because (7, “for,” v 10)—although I am a righteous man who has always kept God’s commands (vv 10–12)—he is determined to make me suffer as long as he wants (vv 13–14). If I were to find him now, and he were to listen to my defense, he would have to admit my innocence, and forthwith desist from his persecution of me; but he is more committed to his plan of harassment than he is to the execution of justice. That is why he will not let me find him. [Word Biblical Commentary]

VERSES 23:13-17

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

13 “But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. 14 “For He performs what is appointed for me, And many such decrees are with Him. 15 “Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; When I consider, I am terrified of Him. 16 “It is God who has made my heart faint, And the Almighty who has dismayed me, 17 But I am not silenced by the darkness, Nor deep gloom which covers me.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

13 But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does. 14 For he will complete what he appoints for me, and many such things are in his mind. 15 Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him. 16 God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; 17 yet I am not silenced because of the darkness, nor because thick darkness covers my face.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

13 But He is unchangeable; who can oppose Him? He does what He desires. 14 He will certainly accomplish what He has decreed for me, and He has many more things like these in mind. 15 Therefore I am terrified in His presence; when I consider this, I am afraid of Him. 16 God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me. 17 Yet I am not destroyed by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

13 “But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. 14 He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store. 15 That is why I am terrified before him; when I think of all this, I fear him. 16 God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me. 17 Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

C. Job's exacerbation with God's sovereignty (23:13–17)

13 “But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. 14 “For He performs what is appointed for me, And many such decrees are with Him.

V. 13 - “unique” (other transl. “stands alone;” “unchangeable”) is the same word used in the Shema of Deut. 6:4 (ʿeḥād). Reflects Job’s monotheism.

We also see the doctrine of God’s immutability here (Num 23:19; Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17).

What he desires, that he does is literally “And his nepesh does what he desires.”

Again Job recoiled from the idea of confronting God in a court hearing. How could he dare counter God (cf. 9:3, 14, 17) who is unique (He stands alone is lit., “He is in one,” i.e., He is in a class by Himself) and does what He wishes (cf. Ps. 115:3), including what He had in mind for Job (cf. Job 10:13). [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Not only was God inaccessible, but he acted independently and like an absolute sovereign. In the language of the KJV, “The LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth” (Ps 47:2...). [New American Commentary]

Job’s God was an absolute monarch and decreed all things, even Job’s suffering (cf. 1 Thess 3:3). [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary]

1. God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree. (Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 6:17; Romans 9:15, 18; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5; Acts 4:27, 28; John 19:11; Numbers 23:19; Ephesians 1:3-5) [LBC 1689, chapter 3]

Those who resist or deny the sovereignty of God rob themselves of peace and courage. “There is no attribute of God more comforting to His children than the doctrine of divine sovereignty,” said Charles Haddon Spurgeon. “On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings.” Why? Because the human heart is proud and does not want to submit to Almighty God. People want to “do their own thing” and “do it their way,” rather than find delight in doing the will of God.

If this doctrine is such a source of strength, then why was Job so frightened when he thought about the sovereignty of God? It was because he suffered so much and wondered what Almighty God would send to him next. It’s one thing to submit to God when you can see His face and hear His voice in His Word. But when, like Job, you are in darkness and pain, it is easy to “fall apart” and become frightened. “He carries out His decree against me, and many such plans He still has in store” (Job 23:14, NIV). What will happen next? [Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Patient]

15 “Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; When I consider, I am terrified of Him. 16 “It is God who has made my heart faint, And the Almighty who has dismayed me,

“Therefore” comes from 2 Hebrew prep. combined. Points back to a “reason” cf. NIV “That is why I am terrified before him; when I think of all this, I fear him.” Context.

Presence = face. Cf. 22:26.

Job was terrified (bāhal, “disturbed, dis-mayed,” 4:5; 21:6; 22:10; 23:15–16) and weakened (faint). Terror came not because of his sinful nature, as Eliphaz suggested (22:10), but because of the Lord’s awesome nature. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Job did become terrified when God finally spoke to him out of the whirlwind. All he could do was confess his unworthiness and cover his mouth (40:4).

Job 40:4 “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth.

17 But I am not silenced by the darkness, Nor deep gloom which covers me.

Hebrew is uncertain and “not” may be “surely” which changes the meaning significantly.

The darkness of v. 16 does not silence Job.

VERSES 24:1-17

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 “Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, And why do those who know Him not see His days? 2 “Some remove the landmarks; They seize and devour flocks. 3 “They drive away the donkeys of the orphans; They take the widow’s ox for a pledge. 4 “They push the needy aside from the road; The poor of the land are made to hide themselves altogether. 5 “Behold, as wild donkeys in the wilderness They go forth seeking food in their activity, As bread for their children in the desert. 6 “They harvest their fodder in the field And glean the vineyard of the wicked. 7 “They spend the night naked, without clothing, And have no covering against the cold. 8 “They are wet with the mountain rains And hug the rock for want of a shelter. 9 “Others snatch the orphan from the breast, And against the poor they take a pledge. 10 “They cause the poor to go about naked without clothing, And they take away the sheaves from the hungry. 11 “Within the walls they produce oil; They tread wine presses but thirst. 12 “From the city men groan, And the souls of the wounded cry out; Yet God does not pay attention to folly. 13 “Others have been with those who rebel against the light; They do not want to know its ways Nor abide in its paths. 14 “The murderer arises at dawn; He kills the poor and the needy, And at night he is as a thief. 15 “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Saying, ‘No eye will see me.’ And he disguises his face. 16 “In the dark they dig into houses, They shut themselves up by day; They do not know the light. 17 “For the morning is the same to him as thick darkness, For he is familiar with the terrors of thick darkness.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 “Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days? 2 Some move landmarks; they seize flocks and pasture them. 3 They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the widow’s ox for a pledge. 4 They thrust the poor off the road; the poor of the earth all hide themselves. 5 Behold, like wild donkeys in the desert the poor go out to their toil, seeking game; the wasteland yields food for their children. 6 They gather their fodder in the field, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked man. 7 They lie all night naked, without clothing, and have no covering in the cold. 8 They are wet with the rain of the mountains and cling to the rock for lack of shelter. 9 (There are those who snatch the fatherless child from the breast, and they take a pledge against the poor.) 10 They go about naked, without clothing; hungry, they carry the sheaves; 11 among the olive rows of the wicked they make oil; they tread the winepresses, but suffer thirst. 12 From out of the city the dying groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help; yet God charges no one with wrong. 13 “There are those who rebel against the light, who are not acquainted with its ways, and do not stay in its paths. 14 The murderer rises before it is light, that he may kill the poor and needy, and in the night he is like a thief. 15 The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me’; and he veils his face. 16 In the dark they dig through houses; by day they shut themselves up; they do not know the light. 17 For deep darkness is morning to all of them; for they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Why does the Almighty not reserve times for judgment? Why do those who know Him never see His days? 2 The wicked displace boundary markers. They steal a flock and provide pasture for it. 3 They drive away the donkeys owned by the fatherless and take the widow's ox as collateral. 4 They push the needy off the road; the poor of the land are forced into hiding. 5 Like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go out to their task of foraging for food; the wilderness provides nourishment for their children. 6 They gather their fodder in the field and glean the vineyards of the wicked. 7 Without clothing, they spend the night naked, having no covering against the cold. 8 Drenched by mountain rains, they huddle against the rocks, shelterless. 9 The fatherless infant is snatched from the breast; the nursing child of the poor is seized as collateral. 10 Without clothing, they wander about naked. They carry sheaves but go hungry. 11 They crush olives in their presses; they tread the winepresses, but go thirsty. 12 From the city, men groan; the mortally wounded cry for help, yet God pays no attention to this crime. 13 The wicked are those who rebel against the light. They do not recognize its ways or stay on its paths. 14 The murderer rises at dawn to kill the poor and needy, and by night he becomes a thief. 15 The adulterer's eye watches for twilight, thinking: No eye will see me; he covers his face. 16 In the dark they break into houses; by day they lock themselves in, never experiencing the light. 17 For the morning is like darkness to them. Surely they are familiar with the terrors of darkness!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 "Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days? 2 There are those who move boundary stones; they pasture flocks they have stolen. 3 They drive away the orphan's donkey and take the widow's ox in pledge. 4 They thrust the needy from the path and force all the poor of the land into hiding. 5 Like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go about their labor of foraging food; the wasteland provides food for their children. 6 They gather fodder in the fields and glean in the vineyards of the wicked. 7 Lacking clothes, they spend the night naked; they have nothing to cover themselves in the cold. 8 They are drenched by mountain rains and hug the rocks for lack of shelter. 9 The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt. 10 Lacking clothes, they go about naked; they carry the sheaves, but still go hungry. 11 They crush olives among the terraces; they tread the winepresses, yet suffer thirst. 12 The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing. 13 "There are those who rebel against the light, who do not know its ways or stay in its paths. 14 When daylight is gone, the murderer rises up, kills the poor and needy, and in the night steals forth like a thief. 15 The eye of the adulterer watches for dusk; he thinks, 'No eye will see me,' and he keeps his face concealed. 16 In the dark, thieves break into houses, but by day they shut themselves in; they want nothing to do with the light. 17 For all of them, midnight is their morning; they make friends with the terrors of darkness.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

D. Job's concern over God's indifference (24:1–17)

d. Job's concern over God's indifference (24:1–17)

(1) God's indifference toward judging overt sinners (24:1–12)

(2) God's indifference toward judging secret sinners (24:13–17)

Job 24:5–11 gives one of the most graphic pictures of the plight of the poor found anywhere in the Bible. See them foraging for food like wild animals in the desert (vv. 5–6), freezing because they have no clothing (v. 7), drenched by the rain because they have no houses to live in (v. 8), weeping because their children have been snatched from their arms until they pay their debts (v. 9), and forced to work for the rich and yet not allowed to eat any of the food that they harvest (vv. 10–11). Even the oxen are permitted to eat the grain that they thresh! (Deut. 25:4). [Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*]

1 “Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, And why do those who know Him not see His days?”

Tricky verse: “Times” = “times of judgment” (cf. other transl.). Basic meaning . . . why does God not hold court so that the righteous can appeal to Him - especially regarding the unrighteous (examples following)?

Note “know God” not a common phrase in Hebrew. Cf. 18:21.

Why do bad people get away with their crimes? Cf. judgment in 27:19-23; Psalm 73.

2 “Some remove the landmarks; They seize and devour flocks.”

This practice is condemned in Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17. See also Proverbs 22:28; 23:10; Hosea 5:10. “They” refers in these verses to the powerful, the rich, in contrast to the poor. [UBS Handbook Series]

These 2 crimes may be connected. “By moving the boundaries while the flock grazed near the border, the thief thus brought them over to his side of the line.” [New American Commentary]

We need to observe that people do not get up in the middle of the night and move a neighbor's boundary stone, to the consternation of the landholder the next morning. When landmarks are moved, there is at least a tacit approval by the community, and those responsible believe they are within their rights in so doing, and may in fact have the law on their side. It is a typical move of upper-class moralists (like the author of Job) to make out that such oppression of the underprivileged is an example of the wickedness of individuals when it is rather structurally determined and legitimated by the social system that gives the moralists their own status and livelihood. [Word Biblical Commentary]

This, therefore, may have more to do with a culturally sanctioned crime of the rich and powerful, who, even in our day, coerce politicians to do their bidding (Eg. “big pharma”).

3 “They drive away the donkeys of the orphans; They take the widow’s ox for a pledge.

This chiasmically arranged verse introduces the victims of these crimes. They are the powerless members of the community, those with no men to lead their families (see comment on 22:9). Deuteronomy 24:6 forbids seizing the means of livelihood as payment for a debt. The donkey and the ox were necessities for the “orphan” (“fatherless” in 22:9; 23:9) and the “widow” (Deut 10:12–19). [New American Commentary]

4 “They push the needy aside from the road; The poor of the land are made to hide themselves altogether.

Several commentators and English translations rearrange the verses of this section, but if the flow seems irregular or the logic flawed, it must be remembered who was speaking and the extreme anguish that he was suffering. This is no trial lawyer with a polished presentation but a man with a dreadful disease, on an ash heap, accused of awful crimes by healthy friends with sick arguments. . . . Habel suggests a metaphorical interpretation: “When the property and possessions of the poor are appropriated, they are compelled to leave the mainstream of society and eke out an existence in the hidden corners of their community.”⁴⁶ [New American Commentary]

5 “Behold, as wild donkeys in the wilderness They go forth seeking food in their activity, As bread for their children in the desert. 6 “They harvest their fodder in the field And glean the vineyard of the wicked.

And they glean the vineyard of the wicked man: glean, meaning to gather what is left in the fields after the harvest, translates a word found only here, and its meaning is not certain. TEV does not say glean, which was the legitimate work of the poor. It seems that the poor are taking the grapes without asking. [UBS Handbook Series]

“Gleaning” was regularly the way the poor fed themselves (cf. Lev 19:10; Ruth 2).

7 “They spend the night naked, without clothing, And have no covering against the cold. 8 “They are wet with the mountain rains And hug the rock for want of a shelter.

And cling to the rock for want of shelter: cling is literally “embrace” and is used in Genesis 29:13 of Laban embracing Jacob and kissing him. The poet draws a picture of wet, miserable creatures hugging the rocks in search of warmth: “they huddle beside the rocks for shelter” (TEV). [UBS Handbook Series]

“naked” = no outer garment. Cf. 22:6.

The “rock” (רֹקֵץ) where they shelter will not be a lone rock but the hilly rocky country, where there are caves . . . [Word Biblical Commentary]

9 “Others snatch the orphan from the breast, And against the poor they take a pledge.

Cf. v. 3.

Not infants, but juvenile children:

That is to say, in Israel, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, loans of money were secured by pledges, usually of property, which became the lender’s if the debtor defaulted, but sometimes of persons, especially the children or slaves of the debtor. If children were pledged for a debt and then the debtor was unable to pay, the value of the labor of the child could be credited against the debt (see G. A. Barrois, IDB, 1:809–11). [Word Biblical Commentary]

10 “They cause the poor to go about naked without clothing, And they take away the sheaves from the hungry.

10a is the same as 7a. Sheaves = grain / food. May be that the hungry here were employed to transport the sheaves, like human mules. Starving, carrying food but forbidden to eat from it. As v. 11.

11 “Within the walls they produce oil; They tread wine presses but thirst.

The first line is uncertain. Of it Pope said, “The difficulties . . . are formidable and one can only guess at the meaning.”⁵² An NIV footnote gives a very possible alternative to “among the terraces” (lit. “between their walls”) as “between the millstones.”⁵³ The verb occurs only here but is assumed to be related to *yīṣhār*, “[olive] oil.” [NAC]

Olive oil production, in October or November, was an important industry of ancient Palestine, and those engaged in its production could perhaps be better regarded as factory workers than farm laborers. The olives were shaken or beaten from the trees with poles (Deut 24:20) and carried in baskets to the olive press (for an illustration, see IDB, 3:596); the press would not be exactly “between” (בֵּינֵם) the rows of olive trees, as the Hebrew text has it, but, more loosely speaking, in its vicinity. The olives could be trodden by foot (Mic 6:15), pounded in a mortar, or crushed by a stone wheel (see also ISBE, 3:585). Whatever the method used, olive oil extraction is a physically demanding activity, and the picture of undernourished laborers engaged in it is a particularly effective one. [Word Biblical Commentary]

On grape production:

The grape harvest occurred in Palestine in August and September. Wine presses consisted of two connected pits, often dug out of rock; the upper pit was the wine press (אֵת) proper,

in which the grapes were trampled (כרד) by foot. The juice then flowed through a channel to the lower pit, which was the wine vat (בקי) in which the wine fermented. Here, as also in Isa 16:10, the term for “wine vat” is used loosely for the wine press.

Deut 25:4 prohibits a landowner from muzzling an ox when it treads out the grain, but here the farmworkers are depicted as being treated worse than oxen. The Talmud applied the law of the ox to an agricultural worker (t. Baba Metzia 87b). The farmworkers here do not even have the status of neighbors who visit a farmer’s field and are allowed to pluck ears or eat grapes (Deut 23:24–25 [25–26]). They are the embodiment of the oppressed and disregarded wage slave. [Word Biblical Commentary]

12 “From the city men groan, And the souls of the wounded cry out; Yet God does not pay attention to folly.

12b may refer to God’s indifference toward the folly of the wicked (so UBS Handbook). This is the main contention of Job: why the powerful wicked increase their wealth at the expense of the poor. RSV, “God pays no attention to their prayer”

Here we see the persecution of the poor by the wealthy. Note James 5:1-6.

On vv. 13-17:

In verses 13–17 the thought shifts to particular kinds of evil persons: murderers, adulterers, and burglars. All of these persons carry out their evil under the cover of darkness. They are people who rebel against the light, go out in the dark, at night, at twilight. Every verse in this section has a reference to avoidance of light. [UBS Handbook Series]

They rebel against the light. The darkness hates the light (Gen 1:4; Job 18:5; Pss 37:6; 97:11; Prov 13:9; John 3:19–21; 2 Cor 6:14; 1 John 1:5–7).

Verses 13–16 are all triplets:

- 13 “Others have been with those who rebel against the light;
They do not want to know its ways
Nor abide in its paths.
- 14 “The murderer arises at dawn;
He kills the poor and the needy,
And at night he is as a thief.
- 15 “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight,
Saying, ‘No eye will see me.’
And he disguises his face.

16 “In the dark they dig into houses,
They shut themselves up by day;
They do not know the light.

We have here a set of three vignettes (in the style of Rembrandt, says Ravasi) depicting the enemies of the light: the murderer, the adulterer, and the thief—violators of the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth commandments (for stereotypical lists of criminals, see also Hos 4:2; Jer 7:9). The three wrongdoers may also be linked by the time of their activity: the murderer before the light dawns, the adulterer at twilight, and the burglar at night. [Word Biblical Commentary]

13 **“Others have been with those who rebel against the light; They do not want to know its ways Nor abide in its paths. 14 “The murderer arises at dawn; He kills the poor and the needy, And at night he is as a thief. 15 “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Saying, ‘No eye will see me.’ And he disguises his face.**

Cf. Prov. 7 (8 Passing through the street near her corner; And he takes the way to her house, 9 In the twilight, in the evening, In the middle of the night and in the darkness.)

Murder and adultery, but not theft (cf. Exod 22:1–4), were capital crimes in ancient Israel (Gen 9:6; Exod 21:12; 22:2; Lev 20:10). Virtually all ancient law codes outside Israel dealt similarly with these offenses. [NAC]

16 **“In the dark they dig into houses, They shut themselves up by day; They do not know the light.**

The crimes mentioned in verses 14–16 are those listed in Exodus 20:13–15; Hosea 4:2; Jeremiah 7:9; only the order differs.

Proverbs 2:13 From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;

John 3:20 “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Ephesians 5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

1 Thessalonians 5:4–7 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

We now resume the depiction of the “rebels against the light” as a group, who say, as in Schiller’s “Robber-Song”: “The moon is our sun” (Der Mond ist unsere Sonne). They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19); as if photophobic, they shut themselves up securely (lit. “seal themselves,” סתם piel) in their houses during the day. They do not “know” the light, that is, the right and God-ordained ways for humans to live; and that ignorance of the moral “light” is displayed by their unwillingness to walk abroad during the day. [Word Biblical Commentary]

17 “For the morning is the same to him as thick darkness, For he is familiar with the terrors of thick darkness.”

24:17 This summary verse maintains the themes of light and darkness. In v. 16c the text reads literally, “They do not know the light.” By contrast in v. 17, “They make friends with the terrors of darkness.” Both words in v. 17 for “darkness” are *šalmāwet*, “shadow of death” (Ps 23:4). Like all fast-talking lawbreakers they turn things upside down and call them by opposite names, so their “morning” is “darkness” (cf. Isa 5:20; 29:16; Amos 5:7; 6:12b; Matt 6:22–23).

On this depressing note Job ended his description of the wicked, who appear to go unpunished because of an apathetic God. Some psalms reflect a corresponding attitude, and so may some of God’s people today as they suffer defenselessly at the hands of others or watch tyrants misusing and victimizing the powerless. [The New American Commentary]

VERSES 24:18-25

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

18 “They are insignificant on the surface of the water; Their portion is cursed on the earth. They do not turn toward the vineyards. 19 “Drought and heat consume the snow waters, So does Sheol those who have sinned. 20 “A mother will forget him; The worm feeds sweetly till he is no longer remembered. And wickedness will be broken like a tree. 21 “He wrongs the barren woman And does no good for the widow. 22 “But He drags off the valiant by His power; He rises, but no one has assurance of life. 23 “He provides them with security, and they are supported; And His eyes are on their ways. 24 “They are exalted a little while, then they are gone; Moreover, they are brought low and like everything gathered up; Even like the heads of grain they are cut off. 25 “Now if it is not so, who can prove me a liar, And make my speech worthless?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

18 “You say, ‘Swift are they on the face of the waters; their portion is cursed in the land; no traitor turns toward their vineyards. 19 Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters; so does Sheol those who have sinned. 20 The womb forgets them; the worm finds them sweet; they are no longer remembered, so wickedness is broken like a tree.’ 21 “They wrong the barren, childless woman, and do no good to the widow. 22 Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power; they rise up when they despair of life. 23 He gives them security, and they are supported, and his eyes are upon their ways. 24 They are exalted a little while, and then are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like the heads of grain. 25 If it is not so, who will prove me a liar and show that there is nothing in what I say?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

18 They float on the surface of the water. Their section of the land is cursed, so that they never go to their vineyards. 19 As dry ground and heat snatch away the melted snow, so Sheol steals those who have sinned. 20 The womb forgets them; worms feed on them; they are remembered no more. So injustice is broken like a tree. 21 They prey on the childless woman who is unable to conceive, and do not deal kindly with the widow. 22 Yet God drags away the mighty by His power; when He rises up, they have no assurance of life. 23 He gives them a sense of security, so they can rely on it, but His eyes watch over their ways. 24 They are exalted for a moment, then they are gone; they are brought low and shrivel up like everything else. They wither like heads of grain. 25 If this is not true, then who can prove me a liar and show that my speech is worthless?

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

18 “Yet they are foam on the surface of the water; their portion of the land is cursed, so that no one goes to the vineyards. 19 As heat and drought snatch away the melted snow, so the grave snatches away those who have sinned. 20 The womb forgets them, the worm feasts on them; the wicked are no longer remembered but are broken like a tree. 21 They prey on the barren and childless woman, and to the widow they show no kindness. 22 But God drags away the mighty

by his power; though they become established, they have no assurance of life. 23 He may let them rest in a feeling of security, but his eyes are on their ways. 24 For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like heads of grain. 25 “If this is not so, who can prove me false and reduce my words to nothing?”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

E. Job's certainty over the wicked's eventual punishment (24:18–25)

Scholars have taken various positions regarding verses 18–25. Dhorme and Pope hold that these verses belong to Zophar and place them after 27:12. TEV does not shift them from their traditional position but attributes them to Zophar. Others assign verses 18–25 to Bildad. Another view suggested by Gordis is that in these verses Job is quoting the friends, and this is the position reflected in RSV with respect to verses 18–20. Still others claim these verses to be an independent poem inserted into the book. However, on the basis of the discourse structure, the Handbook prefers to treat verses 18–25 as an integral part of Job’s argument. Accordingly the Handbook treatment is different from both RSV and TEV.

The preceding verses have plural subjects, but beginning with verse 18 the subject is singular. Therefore translators attempt to provide a transition to this section. RSV puts verses 18–20 in quotation marks on the assumption that these verses are the words of one (or more) of the friends, and adds at the beginning *You say* as Job’s introduction of words of the friends which he is about to quote. NEB keeps verses 18–25 with the rest of chapter 24 and connects to the previous verses by adding “such men are...” In these verses the Hebrew text shifts several times between singular and plural. For consistency RSV has kept these references all in the plural and TEV all in the singular. [UBS Handbook Series]

Verses 18–25 do not sound like Job but rather like one of the friends. For this reason some move all or most of these eight verses to the end of chap. 27, assuming they are the missing third speech of Zophar.⁶² The GNB leaves them in place but labels them Zophar. The NAB translates only two lines of vv. 18–21. Some consider it, like chap. 28, an independent poem by the author of the book.⁶³ The incongruity, however, between these verses and the rest of Job’s speeches is not as great as is often supposed. Job does not say elsewhere that God never punishes the wicked or rewards the righteous but only that there is often no observable connection between behavior and blessing or punishment.⁶⁴ Rather than excising or moving the verses, some would read them either as imprecations or as an unannounced quotation of the friends as in 21:19 and 26:12.⁶⁵ Hartley “cautiously” prefers the former solution, explaining that “since Job wants God to execute his justice against these wicked as proof that he will act justly in his own favor, he utters a series of curses against the lawless.”⁶⁶ Thus he translates most of the verbs as jussives (e.g., in v. 18, “Let their portion be accursed in the land”). The exceptions are v. 18a and vv. 24–25.

As translated in the NIV, the passage exhibits a change of perspective similar to the one that occurs in Ps 73:16–20. After complaining there about the carefree arrogance of the wicked in the face of his own innocent suffering, the psalmist wrote: “When I tried to understand all this, / it was oppressive to me // till I entered the sanctuary of God; / then I understood their final destiny” (vv. 16–17). All agree that the Hebrew in this section of Job is very difficult, and many parts of it cannot be translated with any certainty. [NAC]

18–25 Some of this section is so unlike Job’s argument that we have to assume that it must really be the friends who are speaking here. It is the friends who say that the guilty are nothing but foam on the surface of the water (18), that the underworld soon snatches them away (19), that they are not remembered long (20), that however important they seem, they are soon cut off like ears of corn (24). Perhaps these verses were originally the missing end of Bildad’s speech (ch. 25), or perhaps Job is here quoting his friends (cf. the RSV, which adds ‘You say’ at the beginning of v 18 and takes vs 18–25 as the friends’ words). [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), 475]

We have mentioned already that the Hebrew of the book of Job is the most difficult in the Old Testament; worse still, this section of Job 24 is often considered the most obscure in this book. Before exploring specific lexical issues, we must address the sometimes confusing use of singulars and plurals in this section. [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 247]

This passage may be seen as a description, telling what will happen to the wicked (KJV, NIV, NASB); or it may be interpreted as a denunciation, a curse on the wicked (NKJV). I think it refers to Job’s personal curse on the wicked, who seem to escape judgment.

Job’s malediction can be summarized like this: “May the wicked vanish like foam on the water or snow that melts in the heat of the sun (vv. 18–19). May they be forgotten by everyone, even their own mothers, as they rot in the grave (v. 20). May their wives be barren and give them no heirs (v. 21). May their sense of security and success vanish quickly as they are brought low, mowed down like wheat in the harvest” (vv. 22–24).

“Now,” says Job to his three critics, “if what I’ve said is not true, prove me wrong!” (v. 25) But they never did. [Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*]

18 “They are insignificant on the surface of the water; Their portion is cursed on the earth. They do not turn toward the vineyards. 19 “Drought and heat consume the snow waters, So does Sheol those who have sinned.

Note the ESV puts the words in the mouths of the friends/Eliphaz: “You say,” (not in the Hebrew).

20 “A mother will forget him; The worm feeds sweetly till he is no longer remembered. And wickedness will be broken like a tree.

In RSV verse 20 concludes Job’s quoting the friends. Verses 21–25 in RSV are Job’s own words. Cf. other translations such as the ESV. Could be Jobs musings.

“Womb” and “worm” constitute a merismus (see explanation at 1:20). The womb is our home at the beginning of life; the worm is our companion at the end. [NAC]

21 “He wrongs the barren woman And does no good for the widow. 22 “But He drags off the valiant by His power; He rises, but no one has assurance of life. 23 “He provides them with security, and they are supported; And His eyes are on their ways. 24 “They are exalted a little while, then they are gone; Moreover, they are brought low and like everything gathered up; Even like the heads of grain they are cut off. 25 “Now if it is not so, who can prove me a liar, And make my speech worthless?”

These verses seem to contradict what Job had just said (vv. 1–17), for here he stated that God does punish the wicked. Therefore some scholars assign these words (vv. 18–24) to Zophar, others to Bildad, and still others to Job in quotation marks as if he were quoting one of the three in order to rebut them (v. 25). However, these could just as well be Job’s words, in which he affirmed his confidence that though the wicked live on and get away with sin, eventually they are punished. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

On that latter idea above, see 24:18-20 where Eliphaz sees both the temporal blessing and disaster of the wicked. This is also seen in vv. 23-24.

Oppressors, Job argued, are unstable like foam on ... water. Their land is under a curse and therefore unproductive (so that no one goes to the vineyards to glean grapes; cf. Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22). When they die, even their mothers (their wombs) forget them, worms eat their bodies (cf. Job 17:14; 21:26), and they are broken like a tree. People who mistreat widows (cf. 24:3) will be judged by God in His power. Such sinners may become settled, but God is fully aware (cf. 34:21) of their feeling of security. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

If it is not so, who will prove me a liar ...? Dhorme and NJB connect this verse with Job’s speech that ended with verse 17. TEV keeps it as the final verse of Zophar’s speech. FRCL closes the quotation at the end of verse 24, so that verse 25 is again the words of Job. In other translations (including RSV), which do not set off verses 18–25 from the rest of chapter 24, verse 25 will be taken as the words of Job. All of these solutions have their merits, since the challenge in verse 25 suits Job just as well as the friends or Zophar in particular. RSV translates the line with if ... who. TEV expresses both lines as questions. It refers to all that has been said in verses 18–24. If the translator follows RSV,

this line may be rendered, for example, “If what I have said is not true, is there someone who will show me I am wrong?” “If all that I said is not true, please prove me a liar,” or “If I have said things that are wrong, show me that I am a liar.” [UBS Handbook Series]