

## 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.

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 25 1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, 2 “Dominion and awe belong to Him Who establishes peace in His heights. 3 “Is there any number to His troops? And upon whom does His light not rise? 4 “How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman? 5 “If even the moon has no brightness And the stars are not pure in His sight, 6 How much less man, that maggot, And the son of man, that worm!”

Job 26 1 Then Job responded, 2 “What a help you are to the weak! How you have saved the arm without strength! 3 “What counsel you have given to one without wisdom! What helpful insight you have abundantly provided! 4 “To whom have you uttered words? And whose spirit was expressed through you? 5 “The departed spirits tremble Under the waters and their inhabitants. 6 “Naked is Sheol before Him, And Abaddon has no covering. 7 “He stretches out the north over empty space And hangs the earth on nothing. 8 “He wraps up the waters in His clouds, And the cloud does not burst under them. 9 “He obscures the face of the full moon And spreads His cloud over it. 10 “He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters At the boundary of light and darkness. 11 “The pillars of heaven tremble And are amazed at His rebuke. 12 “He quieted the sea with His power, And by His understanding He shattered Rahab. 13 “By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent. 14 “Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?”

## **PASSAGE OUTLINE:**

### ***Bible Knowledge Commentary***

- I. BILDAD'S THIRD SPEECH (CHAP. 25)
- II. JOB'S THIRD REPLY TO BILDAD (CHAPS. 26–31)
  - A. Job's description of God's majesty in nature (chap. 26)
  - B. Job's description of the fate of the wicked (chap. 27)
  - C. Job's discussion of God's wisdom (chap. 28)
    - 1. Getting valuable metals from the earth (Job 28:1–2)
    - 2. Going underground (v. 3)
    - 3. Remoteness of the mines (unseen) seen by people, v. 4)
  - a'. Getting valuable metals and gems from the earth (vv. 5–6)
  - c'. Remoteness of the mines (unseen by birds and animals, vv. 7–8)
  - b'. Going underground (v. 9)
  - a''. Getting valuable metals from the earth (vv. 10–11)
  - a. Inaccessibility of wisdom (vv. 12–14)
    - b. Wisdom's value beyond [gold, silver jewels (vv. 15–19)
  - a'. Inaccessibility of wisdom (vv. 20–22)
    - b'. Wisdom's value known by God (vv. 23–27)
  - D. Job's concluding soliloquy (chaps. 29–31)
    - 1. Job's past glory (chap. 29)
    - 2. Job's present gloom (chap. 30)

### ***UBS Handbook Series***

- I. Bildad's Third Speech (25:1–6)
  - A. Mankind's Lowly Place in God's Great Design (25:1–6)
- II. Job Interrupts (26:1–4)
  - A. Job Ridicules Bildad's Speech (26:1–4)
  - B. Bildad Continues His Speech (26:5–14)
  - C. The Greatness of God (26:5–14)

### ***The Outline Bible***

- II. Bildad's Denunciations (25:1-6)
  - A. God is Powerful (25:1-3)
  - B. No One is Righteous (25:4-6)
- II. Job's Defense (26:1-31:40)
  - A. How Have You Helped Anyone? (26:1-4)
  - B. Creation is But a Minor Work of God (26:5-14)
  - C. A Two-Fold Vow (27:1-6)
  - D. The Godless Have No Hope (27:7-23)
  - E. Finding Valuable Things (28:1-11)
  - F. Wisdom Cannot be Found or Bought (28:12-21)
  - G. God Knows Where Wisdom is Found (28:22-28)
  - H. Once Respected for Who I Was (29:1-11)
  - I. Once Respected for What I Did (29:12-25)
  - J. Now Despised by the Despicable (30:1-14)
  - K. Unending Pain and Unanswered Prayers (30:15-21)
  - L. Have I Lusted? (31:1-12)
  - M. Have I Mistreated Others? (31:13-23)
  - N. Have I Worshipped Money or Idols? (31:24-28)
  - O. Have I Concealed Any Other Sin? (31:29-40)

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

- I. Bildad: How Can We Be Righteous? (25:1-6)
  - A. God's Greatness (25:1-3)
  - B. Human Failure at Being Right (25:4-6)
- II. Job's Review of Themes: Divine Sovereignty, His Own Innocence, and the Fate of the Wicked (26:1-14)
  - A. Insult with Irony (26:1-4)
  - B. God's Absolute Control (26:5-14)

### ***Be Patient: Job (Warren W. Wiersbe)***

- I. How Faint a Whisper! (25)
  - A. God's Power is Inherent in His Nature (vv. 1-3)
  - B. God's Justice is the Outworking of His Holy Nature (vv. 4-6),
- II. Job Acknowledges God's Power (26)

## **BASIC OUTLINE:**

- I. The Last Words of Bildad (25:1-6)
  - A. Establishing the Greatness of God (25:1-3)
  - B. Contrasting the Fallenness of Man (25:4-6)
- II. Job's Reply to Bildad (26:1-14)
  - A. Bildad Misses the Point (26:1-4)
  - B. God's Greatness in what He Does (26:5-13)
    - 1. God's Greatness Over Death and the Underworld (vv. 5-6)
    - 2. God's Greatness Over Life and the Creation (vv. 7-10)
    - 3. God's Greatness Over Adversaries and the Satan (vv. 11-13)
  - C. God's Greatness in Who He is (26:14)

## **SERMON OUTLINE:**

- I. The Last Words of Bildad (25:1-6)
  - A. Establishing the Greatness of God (25:1-3)
  - B. Contrasting the Fallenness of Man (25:4-6)
- II. Job's Reply to Bildad (26:1-14)
  - A. Bildad Misses the Point (26:1-4)
  - B. God's Greatness in what He Does (26:5-13)
    - 1. God's Greatness Over Death and the Underworld (vv. 5-6)
    - 2. God's Greatness Over Life and the Creation (vv. 7-10)
    - 3. God's Greatness Over Adversaries and the Satan (vv. 11-13)
  - C. God's Greatness in Who He is (26:14)

**PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about):** The greatness of God in what He does

**PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about):** is but a whisper in comparison to who He is

**PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text):** The greatness of God in what He does is but a whisper in comparison to the thunder of who He is

**CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON:** The goodness of God in what He does is but a whisper in comparison to the thunder of His greatness

**SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE:** Bye Bye Bildad

## HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Bildad's brief lecture shows he was running out of arguments with which to answer Job. Like Eliphaz in his third speech (chap. 22) and unlike his own previous speeches (chaps. 8; 18), Bildad said nothing about Job's windy words. The majesty of God, in contrast with the insignificance and iniquity of all men, not just of Job and the wicked, is the theme of this speech. Possibly this was a last-ditch effort to get Job to see how useless it is for an impure human to try to schedule a court hearing with the majestic God. [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), 748]

Note how the 3 friends conclude, in keeping with their ages. Eliphaz, the oldest (27 verses in chapter 22); Bildad, the middle (6 verses in chapter 25); Zophar, the youngest (0 verses, no final speech).

By the standards of previous speeches in the book, the third speech of Bildad in the Masoretic text (25:2–6) is exceedingly short. It has sometimes been thought that Bildad's brevity is a deliberate sign on the part of the author that the friends have begun to run out of steam . . . [David J. A. Clines, *Job 21–37*, vol. 18a, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 628]

This section is wrought with difficulties. Not only the apparent allusions to ANE mythology, but the section in chapter 26 (vv. 5-14) that many scholars think belong to Eliphaz as a continuation of his words in chapter 25.

\*\*\*Note the consideration offered by Janzen in his commentary on pages 172-73.

- \* The words of 26:5-14 belong to Eliphaz.
- \* Job is quoting Eliphaz or the 3 friends in general, perhaps sarcastically [Janzen].
- \* The words are all Job's.
- \* The seeming chaotic nature of the text is on purpose [Janzen]

**\*VERSES 25:1-3\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, 2 “Dominion and awe belong to Him Who establishes peace in His heights. 3 “Is there any number to His troops? And upon whom does His light not rise?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: 2 “Dominion and fear are with God; he makes peace in his high heaven. 3 Is there any number to his armies? Upon whom does his light not arise?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied: 2 Dominion and dread belong to Him, the One who establishes harmony in the heavens. 3 Can His troops be numbered? Does His light not shine on everyone?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied: 2 “Dominion and awe belong to God; he establishes order in the heights of heaven. 3 Can his forces be numbered? On whom does his light not rise?”

**CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:**

The contrast between vv. 1-3 and 4-6 highlight the Creator-creature distinction. Bildad’s words are spot-on. It’s the application of them to Job that is questionable. But Bildad’s words are perhaps the greatest in Scripture on the Creator-creature distinction, the majesty of God and the depravity of man.

Bildad borrows from the thoughts of Eliphaz in 4.17-19, 15.14-16.

**1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, 2 “Dominion and awe belong to Him Who establishes peace in His heights. 3 “Is there any number to His troops? And upon whom does His light not rise?”**

As for the strophe, “Dominion and awe belong to Him,” Clines writes: “The phrase must form a hendiadys; i.e., it has the sense of “a dominion of dread, a rule that inspires fear” (so also Duhm, Gordis “awesome dominion,” Good “dreaded rule,” Moffatt “he wields a dread authority”). [Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 631]

In 12:13, 16 Job said “With God are wisdom and might” and “With him are strength and wisdom.”

Dominion translates a word meaning “the capacity to rule.” The word is used as a noun but has the form of the causative of an infinitive verb, and so it means “that which gives power or domination.” Some translate it “sovereignty,” which means supreme authority, the highest ruling power. Fear is used as in 13:11. [William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 465]

“establishes peace in His heights” = heaven. No lack of perfect peace in heaven. We pray that we see that sort of peace here, hence we pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Or -

He makes peace in his high heaven is literally “making peace in his heights.” According to Dhorme the Hebrew verb make with peace as the object means “to establish peace,” that is, to impose peace where there is strife. The reference may be to conflicts between angels, as in Daniel 10:13, 20–21; destruction of the monster Rahab in Job 9:13; 26:12; Isaiah 51:9; or destruction of the hosts in heaven in Isaiah 24:21. TEV renders high heaven as “heavenly kingdom”: “He keeps his heavenly kingdom in peace.” This translation is less exact than that of FRCL, “He imposes peace up to the highest heaven.” GECL translates both lines “God rules with frightening power, with a strong hand he establishes peace in heaven.” This line may also be expressed “he causes there to be peace in heaven,” “he brings about peace in heaven,” or “he establishes peace where he rules in heaven.” [William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 466]

Most have argued that the writer is alluding to the primordial conflict (Job 9:13; 26:12–13) where God defeated Leviathan and other monsters. Both Baal (Ugarit) and Marduk (Babylon) made peace in the heavens after the defeat of their enemies. [BBC, 505]

Is there any number to his armies? This rhetorical question expresses the thought that God’s troops, armies, are limitless in number. In 19:12 Job said God’s “troops ... cast up siege works against me.” There the same word for “troops” is used as here. In 2 Kings 13:20–21 these troops are “marauding bands.” TEV “angels” is questionable. There is no evidence that angels or stars are meant here and so “troops,” “armies,” or “bands” are preferred. Translated as a negative statement this line may be rendered, for example, “There is no end to the number of his troops,” “His armies cannot be numbered,” “No one can count how many armies he has,” or “He has so many armies that no one can count them.” The translator will note that the two lines of this verse are not parallel in meaning in the RSV form. This is discussed in the next paragraph.

Upon whom does his light not arise? RSV translates the Hebrew word light. By a change of one letter the Septuagint gets “his ambushes,” and this is followed by Dhorme and NEB. The HOTTP committee was divided, half favoring the Hebrew and half the

Septuagint (and both with a “C” rating), and so it recommends either. The use of “his ambushes” provides a parallel for line a; for example, “His squadrons are without number, at whom will they not spring from ambush?” (NEB). Following the Hebrew, TEV translates “Is there any place where God’s light does not shine?” Following the Septuagint we may also render the line as a statement, particularly if the previous line was translated as a statement. In some languages this line will have to be expressed as a positive statement; for example, “They will attack anyone from ambush” or “They wait in hiding to attack anyone.” RSV’s rendering may also be expressed as a positive statement, “His light shines everywhere,” or as a double negative statement, “There is no place where his light does not shine.” [UBS Handbook Series]

Plainly, for Bildad, God governs by force. Even “making peace” (v 2) is for him an act of power, a matter of imposing one’s will, not of negotiating an end to a conflict. So a large standing army is essential for God’s rule to be effective, and of course in Hebrew thought it is the stars that are the army of God, the “host (צְבָא, army) of heaven,” his troops (אֲדָרָתוֹ) that he holds in readiness (not “the angels,” as GNB); see also Judg 5:20; Isa 40:26; Ecclus 43:9–10. In 19:12 God’s troops (אֲדָרָתוֹ) that Job felt ranged against him were of course diseases and misfortunes; but Bildad is speaking here not of them (as against Fohrer), but in cosmic terms, and the “innumerable” troops he refers to must be the stars. For the idea of their uncountability, cf. Gen 15:5; Deut 28:62; 1 Chr 27:23; Heb 11:12. [David J. A. Clines, Job 21–37, vol. 18a, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 632]

God’s “light,” cf. Hebrews 4:13: And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Psalm 8 For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of David. 1 O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! 2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength Because of Your adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease. 3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth!

**\*VERSES 25:4-6\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

4 “How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman? 5 “If even the moon has no brightness And the stars are not pure in His sight, 6 How much less man, that maggot, And the son of man, that worm!”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

4 How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure? 5 Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes; 6 how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

4 How can a person be justified before God? How can one born of woman be pure? 5 If even the moon does not shine and the stars are not pure in His sight, 6 how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

4 How then can a mortal be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure? 5 If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes, 6 how much less a mortal, who is but a maggot— a human being, who is only a worm!”

**CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:**

From the perfections of God to the imperfection of man in vv. 4-6.

**4 “How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman? 5 “If even the moon has no brightness And the stars are not pure in His sight, 6 How much less man, that maggot, And the son of man, that worm!”**

Eliphaz asked similar questions in 4:17, and so did Job in 14:4. Cf. 9:2.

In a very brief speech Bildad tries to subdue Job’s arrogant assumption that he would be found guiltless if he stood before the judgment seat of God (23:3–7). [Russell H. Dilday Jr., “Job,” in *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary*, ed. H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1972), 283]

Verse 4, central question that requires the gospel!  
Born of woman = born in sin (Psa. 51:5)

“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23)

Bildad now uses the argument of Eliphaz in 4:17–19. The wording of this question is identical with Job’s own question in 9:2b.

Verse 5, all of creation has fallen! That includes luminaries (cf. Romans 8:22 and the word “whole” creation / *πᾶσα*). God’s glory is such that the splendor of t/heavens fail to compare! Job 15:15-16 15“Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, And the heavens are not pure in His sight;16 How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water!

Verse 6, man as a maggot. I find maggots disgusting. Associated with death. Cf. Isa. 14:11. Same word *rimmah* translated “worm” in Job 7:5, 17:14, 21:26, 24:20. 4 of 7 uses in t/OT are in Job.

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”

Here Bildad, rather than responding to Job’s concerns about injustice (chaps. 23–24), simply repeated Eliphaz’s twice-trumped-up theme (4:17–18; 15:14–16) that man (*’ēnôš*, “weak, mortal man”; cf. 25:6 with comments on 4:17) cannot possibly be righteous or pure. (In using the phrase one born of woman as a synonym for weak man, Bildad intentionally picked up Job’s wording in 14:1; cf. 15:4.) As Eliphaz had said (15:15), “Even the heavens” in all their brilliance “are not pure.” The moon only reflects light, and the stars (cf. 22:12) lack purity before God because, in comparison with His glory, they are dim. How then could puny man (*’ēnôš*; cf. 25:4) or a son of man, suggesting man’s creation from mere dust, hope to stand before God? Man is so much smaller than the starry universe and is only a maggot and a worm. This disgusting suggestion may have intentionally harked back to Job’s words about his many sores being covered with worms (7:5). [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

This line reproduces 15:15b, with stars replacing “heavens.”

“Maggot.” The same word is used to describe Israel in Isaiah 41:14. The word here translated maggot is used in 7:5; 17:14; 21:26 . . . In those and other passages maggot is associated with a dead body. Only here and in Psalm 22:6 is the term used to express man’s insignificance. [UBS Handbook Series]

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A review of the speeches of Job’s associates shows that they were poor counselors. They failed in several ways: (1) They did not express any sympathy for Job in their speeches. (2) They did not pray for him. (3) They seemingly ignored Job’s expressions of emotional and physical agony. (4) They talked too much and did not seem to listen adequately to their advisee. (5) They became defensive and argumentative. (6) They belittled rather than encouraged Job. (7) They assumed they knew the cause of Job’s problems. (8) They stubbornly persisted in their views of Job’s problem, even when their ideas contradicted the facts. (9) They suggested an inappropriate solution to his problem. (10) They blamed Job and condemned him for expressing grief and frustration. Counselors today do well to be sure they do not fail in similar ways. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

**\*VERSES 26:1-4\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

1 Then Job responded, 2 “What a help you are to the weak! How you have saved the arm without strength! 3 “What counsel you have given to one without wisdom! What helpful insight you have abundantly provided! 4 “To whom have you uttered words? And whose spirit was expressed through you?

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

1 Then Job answered and said: 2 “How you have helped him who has no power! How you have saved the arm that has no strength! 3 How you have counseled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge! 4 With whose help have you uttered words, and whose breath has come out from you?

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

1 Then Job answered: 2 How you have helped the powerless and delivered the arm that is weak! 3 How you have counseled the unwise and thoroughly explained the path to success! 4 Who did you speak these words to? Whose breath came out of your mouth?

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

1 Then Job replied: 2 “How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble! 3 What advice you have offered to one without wisdom! And what great insight you have displayed! 4 Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?

**CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:**

**1 Then Job responded,**

Note the controversy over these verses, especially 5-14. Clines writes in this regard:

26:1 The whole of chap. 26 is ascribed to Job in the present form of the book. Most commentators, however, believe that in chaps. 24–28, at the end of the third cycle of speeches, there has been some damage to the text in the course of its transmission. Not only does the orderly succession of speeches break down, but, as the text stands, Job speaks twice (cf. 26:1; 27:1) without any intervening speech from one of the friends, and, more importantly, presents positions (especially on the fate of the wicked, 27:13–23) quite at odds with his consistent views throughout the rest of the book. For these reasons, I have regarded the present verse as an addition to the book, introduced by a copyist after the damage to the sequence had occurred. [David J. A. Clines, *Job 21–37*, vol. 18a, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 630]

Abruptly Job launched into this magnificent hymn that sings of the powers God himself revealed to him at the end of the book. The focus is on cosmic evidences of divine power far beyond human control or understanding. God is the subject of most of the verbs. The elements have no will of their own. Also the verbs are in the active voice, as God is active in the administration of his cosmos. The chapter concludes with one of the loftiest and most beautiful expressions in the entire Bible: “These are but the outer fringe of his works.” [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 259]

**2 “What a help you are to the weak! How you have saved the arm without strength! 3 “What counsel you have given to one without wisdom! What helpful insight you have abundantly provided! 4 “To whom have you uttered words? And whose spirit was expressed through you?”**

How you have helped him who has no power! Here and in the following two verses Job uses you (singular). This is in contrast to his use of “you” (plural) when addressing the friends, and the singular here suggests that he is replying to Bildad’s last speech. [UBS Handbook Series]

Seems a harsh response to Bildad’s brief rejoinder in chapter 25.

“It is the spirit in a man, the breath [הַמֵּשָׁח, as here] of the Almighty, that makes him understand” (32:8; cf. Prov 20:27)—as well, of course, the principle that keeps one alive (33:4). [Word Biblical Commentary]

**\*VERSES 26:5-14\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

5 “The departed spirits tremble Under the waters and their inhabitants. 6 “Naked is Sheol before Him, And Abaddon has no covering. 7 “He stretches out the north over empty space And hangs the earth on nothing. 8 “He wraps up the waters in His clouds, And the cloud does not burst under them. 9 “He obscures the face of the full moon And spreads His cloud over it. 10 “He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters At the boundary of light and darkness. 11 “The pillars of heaven tremble And are amazed at His rebuke. 12 “He quieted the sea with His power, And by His understanding He shattered Rahab. 13 “By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent. 14 “Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

5 The dead tremble under the waters and their inhabitants. 6 Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering. 7 He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing. 8 He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them. 9 He covers the face of the full moon and spreads over it his cloud. 10 He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness. 11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke. 12 By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab. 13 By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent. 14 Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

5 The departed spirits tremble beneath the waters and all that inhabit them. 6 Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering. 7 He stretches the northern skies over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing. 8 He wraps up the waters in His clouds, yet the clouds do not burst beneath their weight. 9 He obscures the view of His throne, spreading His cloud over it. 10 He laid out the horizon on the surface of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness. 11 The pillars that hold up the sky tremble, astounded at His rebuke. 12 By His power He stirred the sea, and by His understanding He crushed Rahab. 13 By His breath the heavens gained their beauty; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent. 14 These are but the fringes of His ways; how faint is the word we hear of Him! Who can understand His mighty thunder?

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

5 “The dead are in deep anguish, those beneath the waters and all that live in them. 6 The realm of the dead is naked before God; Destruction lies uncovered. 7 He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. 8 He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight. 9 He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it. 10 He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness. 11 The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke. 12 By his power he

churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces. 13 By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent. 14 And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?"

### **CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:**

Some commentators ascribe verses 5–14 to Bildad, to make his third speech longer, or to Zophar to give him a third verbal assault. However, it was typical of Job to outdo his disputers in statements about God’s transcendence. Did Bildad think he knew something of the majesty of the Almighty? (25:2–3) Then he ought to listen to what Job knew of the Lord’s supremacy! [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Verses 5–14 are understood here to be the continuation of 25:1–6, the speech of Bildad. TEV and others identify Bildad as the speaker. Habel, Dhorme, and Pope place 26:5–14 immediately after 25:1–6 in order to continue Bildad’s speech and its common theme without interruption. [William David Reyrburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 472]

See also my Historical Context for interpretive options.

This section is also considered hymnic.

### **5 “The departed spirits tremble under the waters and their inhabitants. 6 “Naked is Sheol before Him, And Abaddon has no covering.**

The meaning of this verse [5] is uncertain. “The dead” are *rēpā’îm*, “ghosts/shades/spirits of the deceased,” and they are parallel to “those beneath the waters.” As Bildad just spoke of God’s dominion over the heights, so now Job speaks of that rule in the depths. All who are there “writhe” in abjection before him from whom nothing is hidden. [New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 259]

The Akkadian myth The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld recounts Ishtar’s passage through the seven gates of the netherworld. As each gate opens for her, Ishtar is required to forfeit another piece of her garments of splendor and power until at last she is left naked. Even so, Ereshkigal, the queen of the netherworld, trembles (Akkad. *ra’ābu*) at her presence. [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 250]

This is the word [*rēpā’îm*] used occasionally in the Hebrew Bible for the shades of the dead and more specifically in Ugaritic for the shades of perhaps deified royal ancestors. [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 250]

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Here is a part of the Lexham Bible Dictionary entry on Sheol (see the entry in Logos for more data)

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SHEOL (שְׁאוֹל, sh'wl). The ancient Hebrew realm of the dead.

#### Biblical Relevance

“Sheol” is the most common word for the afterlife in the Bible, appearing 65 times in the Old Testament. Biblical passages are the only source of information regarding Sheol. References to Sheol in the Old Testament include:

- Genesis 37:35: Jacob wishes to join Joseph in death, saying: “I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.”
- 2 Samuel 12:23: David calls it the land of no return as he mourns his son.

#### Etymology

The origins of the Hebrew word “Sheol” are unknown, but two prominent theories include:

1. The word שְׁאֵל (sh'h), which describes a desolate land—literally “no land” or “unland” (Koehler, Problems, 20).
2. The verb שָׁאַל (sh'l), which means “to ask, inquire.” This may refer to the practice of necromancy, or the consultation of the dead, which was strictly prohibited in the Old Testament (Lev 19:31; Jastrow, Babylonian, 165–70; Schmidt, Israel’s Beneficent Dead). It could also be a semantic use of this term meaning, “to call into account” or punish (Rosenberg, Concept, 8–12).

The Old Testament often uses the word “grave” and Sheol interchangeably. Harris argued that Sheol meant “grave” exclusively, and not “the netherworld” (Harris, “Meaning”), but this view has been predominantly disregarded. Bloch-Smith notes that the language of Judg 2:10 (“after that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors”) may illustrate the ancient Israelite practice of placing the dead in a repository and letting the bones collect underneath the death shroud in a bone bed (Bloch-Smith, “The Cult of the Dead”). [D.A. Neal, “Sheol,” in The Lexham Bible Dictionary, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)]

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Further biblical details regarding Sheol include:

- It is the place of great equity; all are equal, from kings to slaves.
- It is the place where both the wicked and the just reside.
- It is “located under the earth” (Num 16:30–33).
- It has bars to prevent escape (Job 17:16).
- Only God can rescue His people from Sheol (Psa 49:15 LXX).
- It is a place where no one can praise God (Psa 88:10 LXX).
- There is no understanding in Sheol (Prov 9:18; 21:16 LXX).

[D.A. Neal, “Sheol,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)]

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Note the “upper and lower Sheol” theory.

Before God the dead are lying in anguish (an indication of conscious torment; cf. Luke 16:24) beneath the waters, where the dead were envisioned to be, and in šē’ôl (“sheol”) or Destruction (“Abaddon,” a synonym of sheol; cf. Job 28:22; 31:12).

The word “dead” (“departed spirits,” NASB) translates the Hebrew word *repā’îm*, which sometimes is used of a people known as the “Rephaites” and sometimes is used to refer to the dead. The Rephaites were tall like the Anakim (Deut. 2:20–21). At least four giant Rephaites are mentioned by name in the Old Testament: Og (Deut. 3:11; cf. Josh. 12:4; 13:12); Ishbi-Benob (a descendant of Rapha; 2 Sam. 21:16); Saph (2 Sam. 21:18; spelled Sippai in 1 Chron. 20:4); and Goliath (2 Sam. 21:19). Second Samuel 21:20 refers to another tall Rephaite, who is unnamed. Rephaites are mentioned in Genesis 14:5; 15:20; Deuteronomy 2:11; 3:13; and Joshua 17:15.

In Ugaritic, Rephaites were the chief gods or aristocratic warriors, apparently called that because both groups were seemingly giant-like in their power. When *repā’îm* in Ugaritic was used of the dead it seemed to suggest “the elite among the dead.” In Hebrew it may suggest the elite among the dead (cf. Isa. 14:9, “those who were leaders in the world”) or it may simply be a synonym of other common words for the dead. *Repā’îm* occurs in Psalm 88:10b, “those who are dead”; Proverbs 2:18, “the spirits of the dead”; 9:18, “the dead”; 21:16, “the dead”; Isaiah 14:9, “the spirits of the departed”; 26:14, “departed spirits”; 26:19c, “dead.” Job’s point in Job 26:5 seems to be that even the elite dead are in anguish because God knows and sees them. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Cf. NIV: 6 The realm of the dead is naked before God; Destruction lies uncovered.  
NIV translates “sheol” as “realm of the dead” and “abaddon” as “destruction.”

The inhabitants of Sheol are here called Rephaim (רפאים). The term is used several times in the OT for the dead in general (as in Ps 88:11 [10], in parallel with *mitam* “the dead”; and in Isa 26:19, where the underworld is called “the land of the Rephaim”; also Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16). In Isa 14:9, however, the Rephaim are specifically dead kings (they are parallel to “rulers of the earth”), and the same may be true at Isa 26:14 (where the Rephaim may refer to the “lords” of v 13); in Ugaritic the term also occurs, to denote a line of dead kings and heroes (RS 34.126 = KTU 1.161; perhaps cf. also Ezek 32:27, though the term is not used). And in Deut 2:11; 3:11, 13 the Rephaim are a race of giant inhabitants of pre-Israelite Moab (cf. also Gen 14:5; 15:20). See further, M. S. Smith, ABD, 5:674–76; S. B. Parker, IDBSup, 739; O. Loretz, “‘Ugaritic and Biblical Literature’: Das Paradigma des Mythos von den rpum—Rephaim,” in *Ugarit and the Bible: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible*, Manchester, September 1992, ed. G. Brooke, A. H. W. Curtis, and J. F. Healey, UBL 11 (Münster: Ugarit, 1994) 175–224. With that complex background to the term, here in Job the

meaning could be that even mighty kings, now dead, remain in awe of God (so LXX, Pesh, Vg, Tg, Duhm, and Strahan translate with “giants,” Symmachus with θεομάχοι “those who fought with God,” and Moffatt “Before him the primaeval giants writhe”); but it is perhaps more likely that it is all the inhabitants of Sheol, the “shades,” who are in mind (so too Strauss). The word is connected, if only by way of folk etymology, with the verb הָפַךְ “sink, relax,” and is applied to the underworld shades as insubstantial versions of their former selves. [Word Biblical Commentary]

“And Abaddon has no covering.” Hendiadys?

And Abaddon has no covering: Abaddon is used for Sheol in 28:22; 31:12; Proverbs 15:11; 27:20; and Psalm 88:11. In Revelation 9:11 this name is written in Greek. Abaddon is a noun formed from the verb meaning “to perish.” In Psalm 88:11 TEV translates it “the place of destruction.” [UBS Handbook Series]

ABADDON (אָבַדְדֹן, avaddon, Ἀβαδδών, Abaddōn). A Hebrew word meaning “perishing” or “going to ruin”; used figuratively to describe the underworld. In three instances in the OT, Abaddon is mentioned along with Sheol (Job 26:6; Prov 15:11; 27:20). In Job 31:12, Abaddon could be an abstract concept or a place. The Old Testament personifies Abaddon, making it synonymous with insatiability (Prov 27:20). Job describes it as having a voice (Job 28:22). Abaddon is mysterious—only God understands it (Job 26:6; Prov 15:11), and God is not praised there (Psa 88:11). In the New Testament, the word occurs only once: The author of Revelation names the “angel of the bottomless pit” Abaddon (Apollyon in Greek; Rev 9:11). [Lexham Bible Dictionary]

ABADDON [ə bād' ən]. In the Old Testament Abaddon (which the RSV renders as a proper name) is the heinous place of the dead (Heb. ʾabaddôn “[place of] destruction”; KJV, NIV “destruction”; JB “perdition”); it is linked with Sheol. (e.g., Job 26:6), and personifies Death (28:22) and the grave (Ps. 88:11). According to N. J. Tromp (Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament. *Biblica et Orientalia* 21 [Chicago: 1969], p. 81), it may be one of “many transpositions from the grave to Sheol.”

Abaddon is the fiery place of punishment for adulterers (Job 31:12) and the lustful (Prov. 27:20). Never in Abaddon will God’s faithfulness or steadfast love be proclaimed (Ps. 88:11) nor the way of wisdom which only he knows (Job 28:20–23). But the Underworld is nonetheless under God’s power; it lies constantly exposed to his scrutiny (26:6), like the hearts of human beings (Prov. 15:11).

In the New Testament Abaddon (Gk. Abaddōn), the Hebrew equivalent of Gk. Apollyon, is no longer the Underworld but rather the “angel of the bottomless pit,” the king of the evil spirits, which in the last days will take on the form of locusts and will torture those human beings who do not bear the seal of God (Rev 9:11). [Allen C. Myers, in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 3]

“Death” and “Destruction” are translations of Hebrew “Sheol” and “Abaddon,” as the NIV footnote indicates. The capital letters indicate the translators’ ambivalence about whether these should be personified with Hebrew names or translated as common nouns (cf. 28:22; 31:12; Prov 15:11; 27:20; Ps 88:11 [12]). My earlier remarks about Job’s use of popular mythology, specifically about Yam and Leviathan in 3:8, Rahab in 9:13, and Mot in 18:13, also apply here. Hebrews 4:13 interprets this verse: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 259]

Note:

28:22 “Abaddon and Death say, ‘With our ears we have heard a report of it.’

Proverbs 15:11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, How much more the hearts of men!

Sheol = the grave (neutral); Abaddon = the wicked dead within the grave. Could be that Abaddon is synonymous with Greek Hades (or Hell).

My search yielded 6 occurrences of this word in the OT (3 in Job; 1 Psalms; 2 in Proverbs): Job 26:6, 28:22, 31:12; Psa 88:11; Prov 15:11, 27:20. Used once in NT (Revelation 9:11): “They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.”

The satanic angel of the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:11) whose Greek name is given as Apollyon, ‘destroyer’. In Hebrew *ʾabaddôn* means ‘(place of) destruction’, and in the OT it is used as a synonym of \*DEATH and Sheol. (\*HELL). [J. D. Douglas, “Abaddon,” in New Bible Dictionary, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 2]

It is unclear how these verses connect to Job 26:7–13, in that the latter verses refer to creation events in primordial time—probably not the time frame for 26:5–6. The other alternative is that 26:5–6 continue the sarcasm of the previous verses. Job has referenced some anonymous source for Bildad’s supposed words of wisdom. As mentioned above, the NIV, along with most others, has provided “God” as the subject of discussion in the first line of 26:6, but the Hebrew text has only a third masculine singular suffix on the preposition. Theoretically, then, the “him” could be this unnamed source. Even the mighty ones in the netherworld are simply quivering over the wisdom of this wellspring, and in fact, all the mysteries of death and the netherworld are like an open book to this dynamo. I suggest this only tentatively as an alternative consideration.<sup>23</sup> The switch to participial forms discussing primordial time in 26:7 would then indicate when God becomes the unspecified but self-evident subject. [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, The NIV Application Commentary: Job, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 250–251]

Note the tripartite view of the cosmos, common in antiquity, and still referenced today metaphorically.

**7 “He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.**

Verses 7-10/12 may refer to the creation event (so Walton?).

26:7. north. The Hebrew word Zaphon only comes to mean north because it refers to a mountain that was in the north (commonly identified with Mt. Casius, Jebel al’Aqra, in Syria, elev. 5807 ft.). Its function here is not as a direction but as the “sacred mountain” (Ps 48:1), the high heavens where the gods meet in assembly and, in Ugaritic literature, where Baal’s house is. [Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Job 26:7]

The reference to “the north” (Hebrew *zaphon*) in verse 7 is probably to Mount Zaphon, the cosmic mountain or the mountain of the gods in ancient religious thought. This very high mountain was where the gods and goddesses dwelt, rather like Mount Olympus in Greek mythology in later centuries. Isaiah describes the pride of the King of Babylon in these terms: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of the assembly in the far reaches of the north [zaphon]’” (Isaiah 14:13) [Ash, 264]

The sky is here viewed as a tent that is stretched out over its poles; שָׁטַח “stretch out” is commonly used in connection with a tent (e.g., Gen 12:8; Jer 10:20) as well as with the heavens (Job 9:8; Isa 40:22; 44:24; 45:12; 51:13; Jer 10:12; 51:15; Zech 12:1; Ps 104:2; 1QH 1.9); see further N. C. Habel, “He who stretches out the heavens” [Isa 40:21–23; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13; Job 26; Pss 18; 104; 144], *CBQ* 34 (1972) 417–30. There are “pillars of the heavens” at the four corners of the earth (see on v 11), but what supports the “tent” across the vast expanse of the sky, from one horizon to the other? Nothing! There is no center pole to the tent that is the sky. Here then is an example of the power of God, that he can spread out the skies with nothing to hold them up. [Word Biblical Commentary]

Hint of the true theory of the earth. Its suspension in empty space is stated in the second clause. The north in particular is specified in the first, being believed to be the highest part of the earth (Is 14:13). The northern hemisphere or vault of heaven is included; often compared to a stretched-out canopy (Ps 104:2). The chambers of the south are mentioned (Job 9:9), that is, the southern hemisphere, consistently with the earth’s globular form. [Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 330]

Some commentators remind us that pagans considered the north to be the dwelling of the gods.<sup>6</sup> Even if Job had that in mind, line a indicates that that sacred mountain was created by the God our hero honored. Job's assertion that the earth hangs on nothing is amazingly accurate and certainly counters the charge that the Bible's writers held that the earth stood on something else.

26:8 Another advanced meteorological observation appears next. Clouds are water, but in the language of poetry they appear as overstuffed bags. Job was intrigued, knowing how heavy water was, that it did not always and immediately fall from the clouds. [New American Commentary]

Walton disagrees, however:

The cosmic geography expressed in 26:7 has attracted considerable attention, since some have asserted that it reflects some modern, scientific models that conceive of the earth suspended in space.<sup>24</sup> Careful attention, however, shows this not to be the case. The key terms to explore are *tohu* (NIV: "empty space") and *belyi-mah* (NIV: "nothing"). [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 251]

26:7. Spread out on nothing. It is the vast trackless waste of primordial waters that is described as the "nothing" on which the earth sits. Evidence for this is that the word describing what the north is spread out on (NIV: "empty space") is the same word that describes the watery cosmic chaos of Genesis 1:2 (NIV: "formless"). In Babylonian literature, Shamash is praised as the one who suspends from the heavens the circle of the lands. This was part of ancient perception of the cosmos rather than a covert allusion to modern scientific understanding. See comment on Psalm 24:2. [BBC, Job 26:7]

#### **8 "He wraps up the waters in His clouds, and the cloud does not burst under them.**

The clouds are conceived of as "the waterskins of the sky" (as in 38:37). At creation, God wrapped up all the rain waters in the clouds, but—so great is his power—they did not burst, for all the weight of the water. [Word Biblical Commentary]

Mindful of Genesis 1.

#### **9 "He obscures the face of the full moon and spreads His cloud over it. 10 "He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness.**

"The full moon" could also be translated "His throne" by different vocalization. This may refer to the inaccessibility of God.

He covers the face of the moon: as the RSV footnote indicates, moon is "throne" in the Hebrew text. Moon or full moon is obtained by a change of vowels in the word for "throne." HOTTIP gives the Hebrew an "A" rating and translates "the front of the throne,"

which is accepted by TOB and GECL. Poetic passages such as Psalm 11:4 and 103:19 speak of God's throne being in the heavens. God's throne is likewise associated with the flood in Psalm 29:10, where "flood" may refer to the waters above the firmament of heaven. It is quite natural, therefore, that the sense here can be that God veils his throne with the clouds to conceal himself. Translators can follow HOTTTP and use, for example, GECL as a model: "In thick clouds he covers his throne." [UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 476]

Note that the LXX has θρόνος. I think this is a better option (cf. KJV and HCSB).

The JPS / Jewish Tanakh has "throne."

Again the point of the verse is that God is in complete control of celestial phenomena, uncovering "the grave" in v. 6 but covering the "moon" in v. 9. [New American Commentary]

These are "statements amazingly in accord with facts not known or agreed on by scientists till a few hundred years ago. In the clouds in the sky God gathers up water (evaporation), and He can cover the ... moon with clouds. At the horizon ... light and darkness seem to separate. The horizon is circular, for the verb marks out translates the word ḥūq, "to draw a circle," and suggests the curvature of the earth. This too accords with the facts known by scientists only in recent times." [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Proverbs 8:27 "When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,"

**11 "The pillars of heaven tremble and are amazed at His rebuke. 12 "He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. 13 "By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.**

"Verses 11–12 portray a storm, while v. 13 depicts the subsequent calm. As a servant quakes at the rebuke of his master, so the heavens thunder in subjection to God's will." [NAC]

11 The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke. 12 By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces. 13 By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent. [NIV]

11 The pillars that hold up the sky tremble, astounded at His rebuke. 12 By His power He stirred the sea, and by His understanding He crushed Rahab. 13 By His breath the heavens gained their beauty; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent. [HCSB]

9:13b . . . "Beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab." Some scholars ID Rahab with Leviathan in 3:8 (ANE mythical creature that stood for destruction). Rahab was also a symbol of the sea, in part. t/Red Sea. Egypt is referred to as "Rahab" in Isaiah 30:7 & Psalm 87:4. No extrabiblical refs to Rahab exist [BBC]

In Isa 50:2 and Nah 1:4 God's "blast" (הרעג) dries up the sea and turns rivers into a desert; in Ps 106:9 it dries up the Red Sea.

The [fleeing] serpent may be another description of this sea god, also known as Leviathan (Isa. 27:1). God is over the sea, and He is also superior to all mythological representations of evil. [BKC]

His hand pierced the fleeing serpent: this is no doubt a reference to the same event described in Isaiah 27:1: "In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and will slay the dragon that is in the sea." This monster is mentioned in 3:8 (see there for comments) and again in 41:1. [UBS Handbook]

"Breath" (v. 13) = Heb. *ruach* (wind, spirit/Spirit, breath).

13 We are still in the same mythological picture here (as against Duhm, for example, who thinks the text is now dealing with the present); the slaying of the serpent shows clearly enough that the setting is still primordial times. But the idea of the primeval conflict being played out under dark clouds and of victory for the deity being announced by the clearing of the sky is an unparalleled one. The fleeing serpent (הירב שחן) is known also from Isa 27:1, where it is called Leviathan, the "twisting" (גולקע) serpent, and associated with the sea "dragon" (נינה). There these mythological beings are identities for Egypt and Assyria, but here of course the reference is to the conquest of chaos that is effected by the acts of creation. As everywhere in this chapter, the theme is the power of God, and the vignettes of creative acts since v 7 have all earned their place in the speech as illustrations of the topic sentence of 25:2: "A dreadful dominion is his." [David J. A. Clines, Job 21–37, vol. 18a, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 638–639]

Perhaps a better alternative is to see another, Satan? Demons?, behind the "fleeing serpent." So Jonathan Edwards: "It might have been translated, 'His hands have wounded or tormented the crooked serpent,' that is, the devil. [Jonathan Edwards, The "Blank Bible": Part 1 & Part 2, ed. Stephen J. Stein and Harry S. Stout, vol. 24, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 451]

On verses 12 and 13, Ash writes:

These verses speak, in storybook language, that would be recognized all over the ancient Near East, of the conquest and subjugation of supernatural evil. "The sea" is a picture of the forces of chaos and disorder that threaten to swamp the moral order of creation with injustice (v. 12). "Rahab" (v. 12), also called "the fleeing serpent" (v. 13), is a storybook name for the gigantic sea monster or sea serpent that lives in the sea and embodies all the anti-God forces of evil in the universe. [Ash, 265-66]

**14 “Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?”**

Job concluded this poem with the astute observation that all these celestial and terrestrial manifestations of divine power “are but the outskirts of his ways” (ASV). We mortals do not see or appreciate what is behind these operations of the universe. When we hear God speak through wind and thunder, it is only his “whisper.”<sup>13</sup> Job’s final question is still with us, “Who could understand” if he spoke in full voice, that is, with “the thunder of his power?” With finite minds we, like Job, seek to grasp the ways of God, forgetting what he said in Isa 55:8–9.

“My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.  
As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Beginning in chap. 38 Yahweh “whispered” to Job out of the storm. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 261]

Proverbs 30:4 Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son’s name? Surely you know!

Proverbs 30:5 Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

John 21.25

The fourteenth-century British spiritual writer Richard Rolle said, “He truly knows God perfectly that finds Him incomprehensible and unable to be known.” The more we learn about God, the more we discover how much more there is to know! Beware of people who claim to know all about God, for their claim is proof they know neither God nor themselves. [Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Patient, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 102]