

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.

Kaiser = Walter C. Kaiser in The Majesty of God in the Midst of Innocent Suffering.

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

- 1 Then Elihu continued and said,
- 2 “Do you think
 this is according to justice?
Do you say,
 ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’?”
- 3 “For you say,
 ‘What advantage will it be to You?
 What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?’
- 4 “I will answer you, And your friends with you.
5 “Look at the heavens and see;
 And behold the clouds—they are higher than you.
- 6 “If you have sinned,
 what do you accomplish against Him?
 And if your transgressions are many,
 what do you do to Him?
- 7 “If you are righteous,
 what do you give to Him,
 Or what does He receive from your hand?
- 8 “Your wickedness
 is for a man like yourself,
 And your righteousness
 is for a son of man.
- 9 “Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out;
 They cry for help because of the arm of the mighty.
- 10 “But no one says,
 ‘Where is God my Maker,
 Who gives songs in the night,
- 11 Who teaches us more
 than the beasts of the earth
 And makes us wiser
 than the birds of the heavens?’
- 12 “There they cry out,
 but He does not answer
 Because of the pride of evil men.
- 13 “Surely
 God will not listen
 to an empty cry,
 Nor will the Almighty regard it.

- 14 “How much less when you say
you do not behold Him,
The case is before Him, and you must wait for Him!
- 15 “And now, because He has not visited in His anger,
Nor has He acknowledged transgression well,
- 16 So Job opens his mouth emptily;
He multiplies words without knowledge.”

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

Job 35 1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Do you think this is according to justice? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’? 3 “For you say, ‘What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?’ 4 “I will answer you, And your friends with you. 5 “Look at the heavens and see; And behold the clouds—they are higher than you. 6 “If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? 7 “If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, Or what does He receive from your hand? 8 “Your wickedness is for a man like yourself, And your righteousness is for a son of man. 9 “Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry for help because of the arm of the mighty. 10 “But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night, 11 Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth And makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ 12 “There they cry out, but He does not answer Because of the pride of evil men. 13 “Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, Nor will the Almighty regard it. 14 “How much less when you say you do not behold Him, The case is before Him, and you must wait for Him! 15 “And now, because He has not visited in His anger, Nor has He acknowledged transgression well, 16 So Job opens his mouth emptily; He multiplies words without knowledge.”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

Bible Knowledge Commentary

- III. ELIHU'S THIRD SPEECH (CHAP. 35)
 - A. Job's inconsistency (35:1-3)
 - B. Man's inability to affect God because of God's greatness (35:4-8)
 - C. Man's inability to influence God because of man's pride (35:9-16)

UBS Handbook Series

- III. Elihu's Third Speech Job 35:1-16
 - A. Elihu Challenges Job's Claim To Innocence Job 35:1-4
 - B. Elihu Claims That It is Not God But Job's Fellow Men Who are Affected by His Sin Job 35:5-13
 - C. Elihu Ridicules Job for Being Ignorant Job 35:14-16

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

- III. Elihu's Third Speech (35:1-16)
 - A. His Statement of Job's Argument (35:1-3)
 - B. His Answers to Job's Argument (35:4-15)
 - 1. GOD AND HUMAN GOOD BEHAVIOR (35:4-8)
 - 2. GOD IS DETACHED FROM HUMAN WOE (35:9-15)
 - C. His Insult to Job (35:16)

Be Patient: Job (Warren W. Wiersbe)

- II/III. God is Just (34-35)
 - A. "God is unjust" (34:5-6, 10-37)
 - 1. Elihu presented three arguments to prove that there is no injustice with God
 - a. If God is unjust, then He is not God (34:10-15)
 - b. If God were unjust, there could be no just government on earth (34:16-20)
 - c. If God were unjust, then He must not see what is going on in the world (34:21-30)
 - B. "There is no profit in obeying God" (34:7-9; 35:1-16)

Job (Charles Swindoll)

- I. Observing Elihu's Approach
- II. Analyzing Elihu's Mistakes
 - A. He Took Too Long to Get Started
 - B. He Comes Across as Pompous
 - C. He States What Job Knows
 - D. He Never Acknowledges that He Doesn't Know for Sure

III. Analyzing Elihu's Speeches

- A. His First Speech
- B. His Second Speech
- C. His Third Speech
- D. His Fourth Speech

Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash)

III. Elihu's Third Speech: What's the Point of Being Good? (35)

- A. The Question: What's the Point of Being Good? (1-4)
- B. The First Answer: It's the Wrong Question to Ask (5-8)
- C. The Second Answer: Don't Expect an Answer (9-16)

BASIC OUTLINE:

SEE TALBERT PAGE 177 FOR ALL FOUR SPEECHES

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

III. Elihu's Third Speech: Is God Obligated? (35)

- A. Job's Arguments (1-3)
- B. Elihu's Answers (4-15)
 - 1. First Answer (4-8)
 - 2. Second Answer (9-15)
- C. Elihu's Assessment (16)

SERMON OUTLINE:

III. Elihu's Third Speech: Is God Obligated? (35:1-16)

- A. Job's Arguments (1-3)
 - 1. Job claims a greater righteousness than God (2)
 - 2. Job claims that being good doesn't matter (3)
- B. Elihu's Answers (4-15)
 - 1. First Answer: God's Transcendent Aseity (4-8)
 - 2. Second Answer: Job Has Become Proud (9-15)
 - a. An example of pride in those who suffer (vv. 9, 12)
 - b. Elihu gives an example of how people should respond (10-11)
 - (1) There needs to be the recognition of three things:
 - (a) God as Creator
 - (b) God as Comforter
 - (c) God as Counselor
 - c. God does not hear the prayers of the wicked (13)
 - d. Application to Job (14-15)
- C. Elihu's Assessment (16)
 - 1. Elihu's assessment is the same as God's

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): God is under not obligation to us

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about): which is why grace is undeserved.

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): God is under not obligation to us which is why grace is undeserved.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: You're not entitled—and neither am I

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: The Third Speech of Elihu: God is Indebted to No One

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Overview of Elihu's Speeches

Job's Complaint

1. God is silent; He does not respond to me (33:13; cf. 33:13).

Elihu's Answer

1a. First speech: God does speak—through dreams and pain (chap. 33).

Job's Complaint

2. God is unjust; He does not relieve me of my suffering (19:6–7, 27:2; cf. 34:5–6).

Elihu's Answer

2a. Second speech: God is just (chap. 34).

Job's Complaint

3. God is unconcerned; He does not reward me for my innocence (10:7; cf. 35:3).

Elihu's Answer

3a. Third Speech: God is sovereign (chap. 35).

Elihu's Quotations of Job

In Elihu's First Speech

33:9a "I am pure" (cf. 6:10; 9:21; 10:7; 12:4; 16:17; 31:6).

33:9b "Without sin" (cf. 13:23; 23:11).

33:9c "I am clean and free from guilt" (cf. 9:20–21; 10:7; 27:6).

33:10a "God has found fault with me" (cf. 10:6).

33:10b "He considers me His enemy" (cf. 13:24; 19:11).

33:11a "He fastens my feet in shackles" (cf. 13:27).

33:11b "He keeps close watch on all my paths" (cf. 7:17–20; 10:14; 13:27).

In Elihu's Second Speech

34:5a "I am innocent [righteous]" (cf. 9:15, 20; 27:6).

34:5b "God denies me justice" (cf. 19:6–7; 27:2).

34:6a "I am right" (cf. 27:5–6).

34:6b "I am guiltless" (cf. 10:7; chap. 31).

34:6d "His arrow inflicts an incurable wound" (cf. 6:4; 16:13).

34:9 "It profits a man nothing when he tries to please God" (cf. 21:15).

In Elihu's Third Speech

35:2 "I will be cleared by God" (cf. 13:18; 23:7).

35:3 "What profit is it to me, and what do I gain by not sinning?" (cf. 21:15).

In Elihu's Fourth Speech

36:23 "You [God] have done wrong" (cf. 19:6–7).

In this speech Elihu defended God's sovereignty in answer to Job's charge that God did not reward him for his innocence. Elihu's answer was twofold: (a) Since God is supreme, He is not affected one way or the other by man's innocence or sin, and (b) God was not answering Job's cries because of his pride. [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), 761]

Most commentators have had a great deal of difficulty with the logic of this chapter. Driver-Gray felt that "much is awkwardly expressed; and the argument is none too clearly articulated." Whybray agrees that it is "not easy to follow" and that it may be "rather futile to try to make sense of this chapter." But in fact Elihu's thought is largely intelligible and, more than that, quite original. [David J. A. Clines, *Job 21–37*, vol. 18a, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 795]

This speech, unlike the first two, is addressed in the singular. Only Job is in view here.

Although at the start of the book Job firmly rejected this [idea that God will bless him because of his goodness] and showed that he worships God purely and simply because he is God and is worthy of his worship, it would seem that Job has faltered in this as his sufferings have continued. [Ash, 353]

Sometimes you just get worn down.

VERSES 35:1-3

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Do you think this is according to justice? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’? 3 “For you say, ‘What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?’

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 And Elihu answered and said: 2 “Do you think this to be just? Do you say, ‘It is my right before God,’ 3 that you ask, ‘What advantage have I? How am I better off than if I had sinned?’

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Then Elihu continued, saying: 2 Do you think it is just when you say, “I am righteous before God”? 3 For you ask, “What does it profit You, and what benefit comes to me, if I do not sin?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 Then Elihu said: 2 “Do you think this is just? You say, ‘I am in the right, not God.’ 3 Yet you ask him, ‘What profit is it to me, and what do I gain by not sinning?’

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

From Elihu’s point of view, Job has still a lot to learn about justice. Job has been worrying about the benefit (or rather, lack of benefit) to himself of his pious life, asking how he, in all his suffering, can possibly be better off than if he had been a great sinner. Elihu’s significant move in this chapter is to open up the issue—as none of the friends nor Job has—of the benefits of right living. Job has been asking about the benefits to himself, and while Elihu does not negate Job’s question, he is concerned rather with the benefits of piety to God and to other humans. In Elihu’s view, the key point is that God does not benefit from human goodness (nor does he suffer because of human wickedness), but other mortals do. In so saying, Elihu is advocating an interestingly utilitarian ethics that, on the one hand, dispenses with the (theological) theory of retribution and, on the other, makes ethics not so much a duty toward God as a duty toward one’s fellow humans. [David J. A. Clines]

1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Do you think this is according to justice? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’?”

Cf. HCSB:

1 Then Elihu continued, saying: 2 Do you think it is just when you say, “I am righteous before God”? 3 For you ask, “What does it profit You, and what benefit comes to me, if I do not sin?”

Elihu cites Job on two points (vv. 2, 3).

Elihu chose two quotations that are contradictory. The first is typical of Job's protestations of innocence. The second is typical of his argument that God seems not to punish the wicked. To be "cleared by God" he must continue his good behavior. On the other hand he also was convinced that God was not rewarding behavior good or bad.

[Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 342–343]

In his second speech (chap. 34) Elihu was concerned with whether God perverts justice (v 12). "In that chapter, Elihu has been concerned with the justice of God; here it is rather human justice." [Clines]

Note "justice" = mishpat, a word that, along with judicial elements, also carries the idea of sovereignty (Talbert p. 349, fn. 26). More than "fairness." Cf. the word used by God in 40:8 (transl. by NASB as "judgment"). Job got the idea in the end.

3 "For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?'"

How could Job ever hope to be vindicated by God (cf. 13:18) as being innocent while at the same time he insisted that his innocence was of no value before God? Such a position was inconsistent, Elihu argued. Elihu had earlier quoted Job as having asked what profit or gain he would receive for serving God (34:9; cf. 21:15). [BKC]

Do you say, 'It is my right before God' ...? My right translates the Hebrew TseDeq, the word used commonly throughout Job to refer to his claim to be "right, innocent, not guilty of wrongdoing." [William David Reyburn, A Handbook on the Book of Job, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 646]

Question of logic . . .

In 34:9 Elihu paraphrased Job's words: "It profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God." Job's assertion has been that being innocent of wrong has no effect on God. Elihu now examines this idea and sets forth two of Job's claims against each other. On the one side is Job's claim to have a just case to defend against God. On the other is Job's claim that it makes no difference to God whether a man sins or does not sin; God will always act entirely independently of what man does. [William David Reyburn, A Handbook on the Book of Job, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 646]

If you say that God is unjust, it means that you think you are more just than God. Absurdity of fallen men placing themselves above God (He is the "Gold Standard").

Elihu is not saying that there is no benefit before God if one is rightly related to Him. After all, there is a final judgement and we are known by our fruit (so Jesus; James). He is saying that God cannot be damaged in any way by our actions, whether good or evil. Others, conversely, can be.

Job's statements in 7:20; 9:29–31; 34:9 are the background for these words put into his mouth by Elihu. He said that since God does not reward right or punish wrong, there is no point in being good (cf. Ps 73:13). [Robert L. Alden]

Cf. Billy Joel, “Only the Good Die Young” for the common sentiment that doing good does not profit (and isn't “fun”).

Job implicitly claims to exceed God's righteousness (and justice) by claiming that he fulfilled his obligations, but God has not.

VERSES 35:4-8

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

4 “I will answer you, and your friends with you. 5 “Look at the heavens and see; and behold the clouds—they are higher than you. 6 “If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? 7 “If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what does He receive from your hand? 8 “Your wickedness is for a man like yourself, and your righteousness is for a son of man.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

4 I will answer you and your friends with you. 5 Look at the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than you. 6 If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against him? And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him? 7 If you are righteous, what do you give to him? Or what does he receive from your hand? 8 Your wickedness concerns a man like yourself, and your righteousness a son of man.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

4 I will answer you and your friends with you. 5 Look at the heavens and see; gaze at the clouds high above you. 6 If you sin, how does it affect God? If you multiply your transgressions, what does it do to Him? 7 If you are righteous, what do you give Him, or what does He receive from your hand? 8 Your wickedness affects a person like yourself, and your righteousness another human being.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

4 “I would like to reply to you and to your friends with you. 5 Look up at the heavens and see; gaze at the clouds so high above you. 6 If you sin, how does that affect him? If your sins are many, what does that do to him? 7 If you are righteous, what do you give to him, or what does he receive from your hand? 8 Your wickedness only affects humans like yourself, and your righteousness only other people.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

4 “I will answer you, and your friends with you. 5 “Look at the heavens and see; and behold the clouds—they are higher than you.

38:37 (God) - same word for “clouds” is used: “Who can count the clouds by wisdom, Or tip the water jars of the heavens,”

No greater testimony of God’s glory than creation (creation proper, humanity, etc). See God’s response and how He repeatedly appeals to His created order.

Zophar in 11:7, 8 and Eliphaz in 22:12 have both responded to Job by comparing God's wisdom to the heavens.

The very distance from earth to the skies is symbol enough for the differing scales of values between the earthly and the divine, and token of the necessity to judge the matter of Job's innocence in terms of his impact on his fellow humans. . . . here Elihu means rather that God is so far removed from the realm of humans that their goodness or badness can have no effect on him. Elsewhere the height of the heavens above the earth has been used, to different purpose, as a symbol of the unknowability of the divine mind, which is "higher than heaven" (Zophar, 11:8). [David J. A. Clines]

God's transcendence vs. His immanence.

6 "If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? 7 "If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what does He receive from your hand?"

Cf. Eliphaz's similar words about the stars, 22:12, and God's indifference to man, 22:2–3.

A person's wickedness or righteousness affects only man, not God. When God shows mercy it is not because man has persuaded Him to do so, and if He inflicts judgment it is not because man has injured Him. God is sovereign and therefore self-determining. He is not bribed by man; His standards for judging people are firm, impartial, and uninfluenced. But since a person's moral conduct does affect himself, it does make a difference for him whether he sins or not (cf. 35:3). [BKC]

If you are righteous, what do you give to him: are righteous here means "do what is right, live rightly, be upright." [UBS Handbook]

TEV Today's English Version understands Elihu's question as irony, translates "Do you help God by being so righteous?"

God's aseity. We cannot hurt or damage Him. He doesn't need us — or our worship. It's not like He's a balloon with a slow leak that needs a constant flow of air to remain intact.

Certainly God grieves over man's sins (Gen. 6:6) and delights in the obedience of the faithful (Ps. 37:23); but our good deeds can't bribe Him, and our misdeeds can't threaten Him. God's character is the same whether men obey Him or disobey Him. God can't change for the better because He is perfect, and He can't change for the worse because He is holy. [Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 135–136]

Elihu offers a concise refutation of the Great Symbiosis. As discussed in the Introduction, this symbiosis is benefit-focused: The gods reap benefits from the labor of humans, and

the humans reap benefits from the favor of the gods. In its ancient Near Eastern form, people were providing material support for the gods (food, clothing, housing, etc.). [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 361]

“The difference that righteous or wicked behavior makes must be viewed only horizontally (affecting the human world) rather than vertically (affecting God).” [NIVAC]

8 “Your wickedness is for a man like yourself, and your righteousness is for a son of man.

These two lines are parallel:

Your wickedness is for a man like yourself,
your righteousness is for a son of man.

Here we find in a nutshell the point of the whole speech from v 2 onwards. For Elihu, the purpose of right living is not to secure rewards for oneself, not to influence the deity, but to help other human beings. That is where profit or benefit in righteousness lies. Job’s concentration upon his own benefit (v 3) is therefore wrongheaded, and not in accord with justice (v 2). [David J. A. Clines]

Our goodness, or wickedness, affects other people. It doesn’t affect God.

NIV: “Your wickedness only affects humans like yourself, and your righteousness only other people.”

VERSES 35:9-15

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

9 “Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the mighty. 10 “But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ 12 “There they cry out, but He does not answer because of the pride of evil men. 13 “Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, nor will the Almighty regard it. 14 “How much less when you say you do not behold Him, the case is before Him, and you must wait for Him! 15 “And now, because He has not visited in His anger, nor has He acknowledged transgression well,

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

9 “Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out; they call for help because of the arm of the mighty. 10 But none says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ 12 There they cry out, but he does not answer, because of the pride of evil men. 13 Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the Almighty regard it. 14 How much less when you say that you do not see him, that the case is before him, and you are waiting for him! 15 And now, because his anger does not punish, and he does not take much note of transgression,

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

9 People cry out because of severe oppression; they shout for help because of the arm of the mighty. 10 But no one asks, “Where is God my Maker, who provides us with songs in the night, 11 who gives us more understanding than the animals of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the sky?” 12 There they cry out, but He does not answer, because of the pride of evil men. 13 Indeed, God does not listen to empty cries, and the Almighty does not take note of it— 14 how much less when you complain that you do not see Him, that your case is before Him and you are waiting for Him. 15 But now, because God’s anger does not punish and He does not pay attention to transgression,

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

9 “People cry out under a load of oppression; they plead for relief from the arm of the powerful. 10 But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than he teaches the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds in the sky?’ 12 He does not answer when people cry out because of the arrogance of the wicked. 13 Indeed, God does not listen to their empty plea; the Almighty pays no attention to it. 14 How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him and you must wait for him, 15 and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Elihu argues that the absence of a response from God does not mean, as Job thinks it does, that God cares nothing about what happens in the world of humans. Job needs to recognize that God will respond to the cries of the oppressed only if they deserve justice. [David J. A. Clines]

God is not silent / indifferent as Job suggested earlier (chapt. 33).

“What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?” (Deut. 4:7)

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Ps. 34:18)

“The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.” (Ps. 145:18)

“‘Am I only a God nearby,’ declares the LORD, ‘and not a God far away?’” (Jer. 23:23)

9 “Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the mighty.

Verse 9 may refer back to Job’s observations in 24:12, in which the oppressed cry out, but God does not hear them. Here it’s the wicked who are in view.

10 “But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ 12 “There they cry out, but He does not answer because of the pride of evil men.

What, in particular, they have not said, is “Where is God my Maker?” Rhetorical questions that begin “Where is ...” are often negative in tone: so, for example, when the Judeans are threatened by famine, the prophet Joel envisages the nations saying, “Where is their God?” (2:17); an enemy says to a pious person in distress, “Where is your God?” (Mic 7:10). [David J. A. Clines]

Here we have the wicked to refuse to recognize God in His providence, who also gives songs in the night. Cf. Paul in Acts 17 where he appeals to God as Creator.

Who gives songs in the night is generally understood in the sense that God enables people to sing even when they are surrounded by darkness. Nevertheless the word translated songs has been adjusted or interpreted in many different ways. Dhorme thinks it refers to “thunder,” as in Psalm 29:3. Others take it to mean “lights,” “star constellations,” and Pope says the Hebrew root should be associated with a similar Arabic root meaning “violent, courageous, mighty,” and so should be translated “strength or protection.” Rowley observes wisely “It is a pity to rob Elihu of a poetic line when he creates one.” However, similar lines are seen in Psalm 42:8; 77:6. [UBS Handbook]

Assuming that the night is, as so often, figurative for a time of sorrow and suffering (cf. Isa 17:14; 21:11; Ps 30:5 [6]), and that songs in the night are for keeping the spirits up

(cf. Ps 42:8 [9]; Acts 16:25) until the morning when God's deliverance may be expected (cf. Pss 46:5 [6]; 90:14; 143:8) . . . [David J. A. Clines]

When people are in trouble (under . . . oppression) they often turn to God for a way out, but they do not turn to Him as their Maker (cf. 4:17; 9:9; 32:22; 36:3; 40:19), the One who can give joy in times of trouble (songs in the night). Nor do they express gratitude to Him for giving them more intelligence than beasts and birds possess. [BKC]

No one seeks after God . . .

Of unbelieving Judah, the Prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 2:6, "They did not say, 'Where is the LORD . . .'"

Verse 11, cf. Job in 12:7.

Verse 12:

There they cry out, but he does not answer: *There* seems to connect this line back to verse 9 by referring to the situation described in that verse. The word translated *There* normally has this meaning, but not as a connective. Dhorme suggests "Consequently," and Gordis "Then." TEV omits it with no loss of meaning. He refers to God. [UBS Handbook]

How can it be that God ignores the cries of oppressed and innocent people? The answer is that these people may be oppressed, but they are not innocent. They are proud / wicked. Pride as the central sin which parallels God's aseity. Man thinks he's self-sufficient and doesn't need God — until he does. But he doesn't cry out with the right motives/heart. Cf. 33:17.

There's no repentance, only expectation that something is deserved. Seeking comfort, not the Comforter.

What acts please God? Three criteria: 1) Truth; 2) Faith; 3) Praise . . .
Compelling logic of faith.

This presumption is symptomatic of contemporary liberation theologies, which canonize the poor and oppressed simply because of their poverty and oppression. The assumption is that God is necessarily and invariably on the side of the oppressed and owes them relief regardless of their personal relationship or attitude towards Him. This perverts the biblical picture of God's posture toward the oppressed. . . . Suffering itself is not a virtue that commands the compassion and protection of God, nor does it entitle a person to a claim on God. It is the attitude of the poor that determines God's posture toward them (Ps. 10;14). [Talbert, 351, fn. 39]

Cf. full churches after 911.

13 "Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, nor will the Almighty regard it.

The cries of the wicked are addressed to nobody (a god of their making), and so their cries are useless.

“Surely God will not listen to an empty cry,
nor will the Almighty regard [see] it.”

Note use of *shaDDai*. Used more x in Job than any other OT book: 5.17; 6.14; 8.3,5; 11.7; 13.3; 15.25; 21.15,20; 22.3,17,23,25,26; 23.16; 24.1; 27.2,10,11,13; 29.5; 31.2,35; 32.8; 33.4; 34.10,12,13; 37.23. Note the last use, used by God in 40.2.

This verse is a classical statement of the traditional wisdom view of the prayer of the ungodly. Unless it is a cry of repentance, God does not listen. Until now in this section we have not read that those who cry out are wicked and arrogant. But these especially do not deserve to be heard, regardless of the hardship that has befallen them (Prov 1:28–30). [Robert L. Alden]

35:13 The “plea” of the wicked is the Hebrew form for “vanity/ nothingness/no count.”⁹³ The word occurs twice in the Ten Commandments: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, . . . you shall not bear false witness” (Deut 5:11, 20, NASB). Such a prayer for help without the accompanying reverence and obedience is almost like breaking the third Commandment. [Robert L. Alden]

14 “How much less when you say you do not behold Him, the case is before Him, and you must wait for Him!

Elihu attributes these words to Job (“when you say . . .”).

How much less when you say that you do not see him suggests that if God does not hear the cries of the oppressed, because they are proud and evil, it is even less likely that he will listen to Job. [UBS Handbook]

14 How much less a when you say that you cannot see him,
that your case lies before him and you are still waiting for him —
15 and, what is more, that his anger never punishes,
and that he cares little about wickedness. [Translation by Clines]

Elihu is accusing Job of pride and wickedness in his expectations and complains against God - refusing to acknowledge the Creator-creature distinction.

What is the connection of vv 14–15 with what precedes? It seems to be that if God does not respond to the misery of the oppressed merely because they have omitted to address themselves explicitly to him (vv 9–13), “how much less” . . . can Job expect to be heard when he treats God with insolence and denigrates his governance of the world (vv 14–15). [David J. A. Clines]

Job doesn't see God and He seems as a absent lawyer. In 9:11 Job said, "I cannot see him." In several places Job claimed his legal right (10:2; 13:6, 18; 23:4; 27:2; 31:35).

Job's prayers were hindered because of his attitude toward God. Note things that hinder prayer (sin; mistreating your wife).

15 "And now, because He has not visited in His anger, nor has He acknowledged transgression well,

Verse 15 is obscure, and there are many different translations of it. Elihu may be referring to 21:14–26, in which Job asserted that God does not punish the wicked. [UBS Handbook]

The word transgression, as noted in the RSV footnote, follows the ancient versions in which an obscure Hebrew word is changed to a similar sounding word meaning "sin," as in TEV. [UBS Handbook]

Elihu added a fourth and fifth excerpt from Job's speeches to complete this list of reasons why God did not and will not respond to Job. In 9:24 and 21:17 Job had charged God with turning a blind eye to justice. In 12:6 and 21:17 he complained that God overlooked all manner of "wickedness." [Robert L. Alden]

Therefore God does not respond to people's empty (insincere) cries for help, for such prayers stem from pride (arrogance; cf. 36:9). If such proud prayers are not answered, certainly Job's cries of arrogance and impatience would not be heard. Job claimed that he could not see or find God (9:11; 23:8–9; cf. 34:29); yet he had placed his case in God's hands (13:18; 23:7). But Elihu sensed another inconsistency in Job (cf. comments on 35:2–3): the sufferer was willing to wait for God in His justice to clear him, and yet Job felt, according to Elihu, that God did nothing about sin (24:1–12). Elihu here misconstrued Job, for the patriarch did not say God never punishes the wicked; though not punished in this life, they will receive judgment from God at death. [BKC]

Cf. NIV:

14 How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him and you must wait for him, 15 and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness.

Verse 15: i.e. "It seems that God does not generally punish the wicked — or even care."

VERSES 35:16

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

16 So Job opens his mouth emptily; he multiplies words without knowledge.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

16 Job opens his mouth in empty talk; he multiplies words without knowledge.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

16 Job opens his mouth in vain and multiplies words without knowledge.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

16 So Job opens his mouth with empty talk; without knowledge he multiplies words.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

16 So Job opens his mouth emptily; he multiplies words without knowledge.”

For Job to talk out of both sides of his mouth (wanting God to clear him, and yet being concerned that God does nothing to put down sin) was to make empty (hebel; cf. comments on this word in Ecc. 1:2) talk, speaking many words (cf. Job 34:37) without wisdom (cf. 34:35).

Elihu felt that Job could not be cleared by God (35:2) as long as he questioned the value of serving Him (v. 3) and prayed from a heart of pride (v. 12), while thinking that God does nothing about wickedness (v. 15). [BKC]

Elihu closes this chapter of his speech saying about Job that he multiplies words without knowledge, which is similar to what he said in 34:37. See there for comments. Without knowledge means “without knowing what he is saying” or “out of his ignorance.” This line may be rendered, for example, “Job goes on talking about things when he knows nothing about them.” [UBS Handbook]

Job’s sins were heart issues, not conduct per se. A demonstration that you can act right while being bankrupt spiritually. Cf. circumcision of the heart.

This will be the judgment that is given twice by God (38:2; 42:3), at which Job repents.

Elihu’s argument is very different from the simple faith of the psalmists, for example, that God will deliver them just because they are suffering. They do not stop to consider whether their suffering is deserved. [David J. A. Clines]

So what is Elihu saying to Job? He is telling Job that as long as he keeps saying these outrageous and impious things about God, he cannot expect God to answer him. God will not answer his cries any more than he can be expected to answer the cries of other sufferers who do not cry to him from faith. In our soft and liberal cultures we find this offensive. And yet it is truth. Elihu is giving Job “the wounds of a . . . faithful . . . friend” (Prov. 27:6); he is telling Job what he needs to hear. In his rough and uncompromising way he is doing Job far more good than the sappy sympathy of one who dares compromise with the name of God. He is challenging head-on our nature and instinctive but sinful expectation that by our virtue we can put God in our debt and that in our painful cries we have a right to have God listen to us. Neither is true, for God is above and beyond us, unchangeable in his nature and consistent in his determination to listen only to the prayers of those who seek him because he is God, and not because of what they hope to gain from him.” [Ash, 356-57]