

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.

14 “If He should determine to do so,
 If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,
15 All flesh would perish together,
 And man would return to dust.

16 “But if you have understanding,
 hear this;
 Listen to the sound of my words.

17 “Shall one who hates justice rule?
 And will you condemn the righteous mighty One,
18 Who says to a king, ‘Worthless one,’
 To nobles, ‘Wicked ones’;
19 Who shows no partiality to princes
 Nor regards the rich above the poor,
 For they all are the work of His hands?
20 “In a moment they die,
 and at midnight People are shaken and pass away,
 And the mighty are taken away without a hand.

21 “For His eyes are upon the ways of a man,
 And He sees all his steps.

22 “There is no darkness or deep shadow
 Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

23 “For He does not need to consider a man further,
 That he should go before God in judgment.

24 “He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry,
 And sets others in their place.

25 “Therefore He knows their works,
 And He overthrows them in the night,
 And they are crushed.

26 “He strikes them like the wicked
 In a public place,
27 Because they turned aside from following Him,
 And had no regard for any of His ways;
28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to
 come to Him,
 And that He might hear the cry of the
 afflicted—

29 When He keeps quiet, who then can condemn?
 And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him,
 That is, in regard to both nation and man?—
30 So that godless men would not rule
 Nor be snares of the people.

31 “For has anyone said to God,
 ‘I have borne chastisement;
 I will not offend anymore;
32 Teach me what I do not see;
 If I have done iniquity, I will not do it again’?

33 “Shall He recompense on your terms,
 because you have rejected it?
For you must choose, and not I;
 Therefore declare what you know.

34 “Men of understanding will say to me,
 And a wise man who hears me,
35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge,
 And his words are without wisdom.
36 ‘Job ought to be tried to the limit,
 Because he answers like wicked men.
37 ‘For he adds rebellion to his sin;
 He claps his hands among us,
 And multiplies his words against God.’ ”

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

Job 34 1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Hear my words, you wise men, And listen to me, you who know. 3 “For the ear tests words As the palate tastes food. 4 “Let us choose for ourselves what is right; Let us know among ourselves what is good. 5 “For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, But God has taken away my right; 6 Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’ 7 “What man is like Job, Who drinks up derision like water, 8 Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, And walks with wicked men? 9 “For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing When he is pleased with God.’ 10 “Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to do wrong. 11 “For He pays a man according to his work, And makes him find it according to his way. 12 “Surely, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty will not pervert justice. 13 “Who gave Him authority over the earth? And who has laid on Him the whole world? 14 “If He should determine to do so, If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, 15 All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust. 16 “But if you have understanding, hear this; Listen to the sound of my words. 17 “Shall one who hates justice rule? And will you condemn the righteous mighty One, 18 Who says to a king, ‘Worthless one,’ To nobles, ‘Wicked ones’; 19 Who shows no partiality to princes Nor regards the rich above the poor, For they all are the work of His hands? 20 “In a moment they die, and at midnight People are shaken and pass away, And the mighty are taken away without a hand. 21 “For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps. 22 “There is no darkness or deep shadow Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. 23 “For He does not need to consider a man further, That he should go before God in judgment. 24 “He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, And sets others in their place. 25 “Therefore He knows their works, And He overthrows them in the night, And they are crushed. 26 “He strikes them like the wicked In a public place, 27 Because they turned aside from following Him, And had no regard for any of His ways; 28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him, And that He might hear the cry of the afflicted— 29 When He keeps quiet, who then can condemn? And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him, That is, in regard to both nation and man?— 30 So that godless men would not rule Nor be snares of the people. 31 “For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne chastisement; I will not offend anymore; 32 Teach me what I do not see; If I have done iniquity, I will not do it again’? 33 “Shall He recompense on your terms, because you have rejected it? For you must choose, and not I; Therefore declare what you know. 34 “Men of understanding will say to me, And a wise man who hears me, 35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge, And his words are without wisdom. 36 ‘Job ought to be tried to the limit, Because he answers like wicked men. 37 ‘For he adds rebellion to his sin; He claps his hands among us, And multiplies his words against God.’ ”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

Bible Knowledge Commentary

- II. ELIHU'S SECOND SPEECH (CHAP. 34)
 - A. Elihu's desire that his elders hear him out (34:1–4)
 - B. Elihu's denunciation of Job's claim that God was unjust (34:5–9)
 - C. Elihu's defense of God's justice and impartiality (34:10–20)
 - D. Elihu's discussion of the punishment of the wicked (34:21–30)
 - E. Elihu's arraignment of Job's nonrepentance and rebellion (34:31–37)

UBS Handbook Series

- II. Elihu's Second Speech Job 34:1–37
 - A. Elihu Criticizes the Friends Job 34:1–4
 - B. Elihu Criticizes Job's Claim to Be Innocent Job 34:5–9
 - C. Elihu Testifies to God's Justice Job 34:10–15
 - D. Elihu Defends God's Rule Job 34:16–30
 - E. Elihu Calls on Job to Repent Job 34:31–37

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

- II. Elihu's Second Speech Job 34:1–37
 - A. Introduction (34:1–4)
 - B. His Statement of Job's Argument (34:5–9)
 - C. His Answer to Job's Argument (34:10–30)
 - 1. GOD'S UNCHANGING WAYS (34:10–15)
 - 2. GOD'S SOVEREIGN JUSTICE (34:16–20)
 - 3. GOD'S PUNISHMENT (34:21–30)
 - D. His Challenge to Job to Repent (34:31–33)
 - E. He Condemns Job for Not Repenting (34:34–37)

Be Patient: Job (Warren W. Wiersbe)

- II. 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)

- II. Elihu's Second Speech: Is God Fair? (34)
 - A. To a Wider Audience (1-15)
 - 1. The Critical Issue is the Justice and Goodness of God (2-4)
 - 2. The Most Serious Accusation is that Job has Accused God of Not Being Just and Good (5-9)
 - 3. The Central Axiom is that God Cannot Do Wrong (10-11)
 - 4. The Key Reason is that God is Good (12-15)
 - B. The Accusation is that Job Has Condemned the Righteous Mighty God (16-17)
 - C. This is Wrong Because God Does Judge Justly (18-30)
 - a. He Judges With No Favorites (18-19)
 - b. He Judges With No Uncertainty (20)
 - c. He Judges With No Ignorance (21-25)
 - d. He Judges With No Secrecy (26-28)
 - D. He Will Judge Even If He Delays (29-30)
 - E. Job Must Repent of What He Has Said About God (31-33)
 - F. Job's Trial Must Continue Until He Repents (34-37)

BASIC OUTLINE:

SEE TALBERT PAGE 177 FOR ALL FOUR SPEECHES

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

- II. Elihu's Second Speech (34)
 - A. Announcement to Listen (1-4)
 - B. Allegations Made by Job (5-9)
 - C. Answers Given by Elihu (10-30)
 - D. Appeals for Job to Repent (31-37)

SERMON OUTLINE:

- II. Elihu's Second Speech: Is God Fair? (34)
 - A. Announcement For All to Listen (1-4)
 - B. Allegations Made by Job (5-9)
 - C. Answers Given by Elihu (10-30)
 - 1. To All (10-15)
 - a. Elihu's Axiom: God Cannot Err (10-11)
 - (1) God's Nature (12-15)
 - 2. To Job (16-30)
 - a. Job Sits in Judgement Over God (16-17)
 - b. God is the Standard of Righteous Judgment (18-30)
 - (1) He Judges Without Partiality (18-19)
 - (2) He Judges Without Uncertainty (20)
 - (3) He Judges Without Ignorance (21-25)
 - (4) He Judges Without Secrecy (26-28)
 - (5) He Judges Without Impatience (29-30)
 - D. Appeals for Job to Repent (31-37)
 - 1. Elihu's Proposition: Change Your Ways Job (31-33)
 - 2. Elihu's Challenge: The Trial Must Continue Until Job Reforms (34-37)

Closing Points:

- 1. You Can't Know A Standard Without a Voice
- 2. Standards Are Violated, We Call That Sin
- 3. The Ultimate Standard Came to Set Us Free

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): Elihu's second confrontation of Job

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about): consists of his defense of God's justice

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): God is the Standard of Justice

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: God is the Standard by Which Everything is Weighed

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: The Second Speech of Elihu: God is Just

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).

Though verbose, Elihu was less arrogant and presumptuous than the other spokesmen. [BKC]

For Elihu, suffering, though related to sin (v. 27), was more protective than punitive. The first three speakers said God afflicts in order to punish; Elihu said God afflicts in order to teach. He emphasized that suffering can help divert one from sin and resultant death, whereas the three older men felt that unrequited sin would surely lead to death.

All four counselors were wrong about Job's case, however, for all assumed a sin-results-in-suffering viewpoint. When God spoke (chaps. 38–41), He did so directly, not through an angel. And Job's experience did result in his enjoying a deeper relationship with God (42:2, 5–6, 9) and he did enjoy a long and full life (42:10, 12, 16). [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), 760]

Note the contention by some scholars that this section is a redacted addition. However, there is no good reason for this. Support of the integrity of the book runs deep into the Hebrew tradition. Furthermore, there is a reason for Elihu's speeches as they form a transition to God's in chapter 38.

The four speeches of the last major human participant fill the next six chapters. After a prose introduction that corresponds to 2:11–13, Elihu himself spouted an inordinately long introduction of himself, his frustrations, and his plan that he expected would put an end to the debate by satisfying both Job and his friends. In the long run he made little difference. Though he was somewhat kinder than the others and did put greater emphasis on seeing life and its troubles from a divine perspective, he ultimately also subscribed to the theology of retribution, saw Job as guilty, and therefore blamed him for the grief he was experiencing. [Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 313–314]

Mainly for these reasons many consider these speeches a nonoriginal part of the book. But they are in the text, and in many ways they link to and echo other speeches.² The very fact that they are long, repetitive, and even boring points to the quandary human beings face when confronted by unresolvable propositions. The fact that no one answers Elihu points to the frustrating fact that there are no human answers to the dilemma Job and many subsequent sufferers have faced. [Robert L. Alden, 313–314]

In chapter 34 Elihu defends God against charges brought by Job. In verses 2–9 he calls for a hearing of Job's case and lays out the charges against Job. In verses 10–15 he gives evidence of the character of God. Then in verses 16–30 he defends the manner in which God rules the world. Finally in verses 31–37 Elihu appeals to Job to confess his sins and cease his arguments. [William David Reayburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 623]

His second speech was a defense of God's justice, an answer to Job's allegation that God was unfair. The young protagonist spoke first to the three older visitors (34:1–15), as indicated by the plural "you" and "men" (vv. 2, 10) and "us" in verse 4, and then to Job (vv. 16–37) as indicated by the singular "you" (vv. 16–17, 33). [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), 760]

The element of quotation is a notable feature of the speech. In vv 5–6 and v 9 Elihu quotes what Job is alleged to have said, in v 18 what God says in criticism of certain rulers, in vv 31b–32 what he urges Job to say by way of confession, and in vv 35–37 what other people are saying about Job. These quotations, which constitute nearly a quarter of the speech, lend it a certain lecturelike quality . . . [David J. A. Clines, *Job 21–37*, vol. 18a, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 765]

As a whole, the speech may rightly be thought harsher in tone than his first one, but it is not offensive or haughty. [Clines]

The speech has two movements, corresponding to the separate addressees envisaged in it. In vv 2–15 Elihu is speaking to the friends, whom he calls "wise men" and "learned men" in v 2 and "men of understanding" in v 10. At v 16 he turns to Job, and the rest of the speech is addressed to him, as the second-person verbs in vv 16–17 and again in v 33 show. The argument in both movements is the same: God, as the supreme governor of the universe, cannot do wrong by failing to requite good and bad behavior appropriately, whereas Job, who is claiming that God has treated him unjustly, is doing wrong by implying that God has perverted justice. [Clines]

Following the pattern set in the first speech, after the introduction Elihu quoted Job, answered his argument, and challenged him to repent. The large central part of the chapter, the substance of Elihu's speech, concentrates on God's attributes of justice, mercy, omniscience, and sovereignty. [Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 332]

The address falls into two main parts. In verses 2-15 [Elihu] speaks to a wider audience, and then from verse 16 onward he speaks directly to Job. This structure is similar to what we saw in his first address, in which chapter 32 was addressed to the comforters and chapter 33 to Job. In this address, as in the last, we are to picture Elihu at the microphone (as it were) with Job immediately in front of him, but the three comforters and probably other significant local people are also listening. Perhaps the community elders were there too to listen to this great ongoing debate. Elihu will say essentially the same thing in the first part as in the second, but in the second it becomes fuller and more personal, concluding with a heartfelt appeal to Job and a warning lest he not heed Elihu's words." [Ash, 343-44]

VERSES 34:1-4

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Hear my words, you wise men, And listen to me, you who know. 3 “For the ear tests words As the palate tastes food. 4 “Let us choose for ourselves what is right; Let us know among ourselves what is good.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 Then Elihu answered and said: 2 “Hear my words, you wise men, and give ear to me, you who know; 3 for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food. 4 Let us choose what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Then Elihu continued, saying: 2 Hear my words, you wise men, and listen to me, you knowledgeable ones. 3 Doesn't the ear test words as the palate tastes food? 4 Let us judge for ourselves what is right; let us decide together what is good.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 Then Elihu said: 2 “Hear my words, you wise men; listen to me, you men of learning. 3 For the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food. 4 Let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

1 Then Elihu continued and said,

Perhaps a pause to wait for Job to reply to his first speech? This marks the second.

2 “Hear my words, you wise men, and listen to me, you who know.

You wise men is “you (plural) who are wise,” and you who know is “you (plural) who know things.” Such words in Elihu’s mouth are sarcasm. In 15:2, 18 Eliphaz clearly identified himself with the wise men, but in 32:9 Elihu said that it is not the aged that are wise. So if Elihu is addressing the three friends, he is speaking ironically, and this is the best way to understand this verse. Elihu considers himself to be the teacher. TEV brings out the irony: “You men are so wise, so clever.” . . . Translators should express the sarcasm or irony of Elihu. Irony is the use of words whose intended meaning is the opposite of the literal sense of the words. In other words Elihu does not consider the friends to be wise, but calls them wise to ridicule them. [UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 624]

Challenge of “tone” in reading. Here Elihu is being sarcastic (Eg. “Listen you geniuses”). Contra Clines, but cf. his critique of them in chapter 32. Note Simon the magician’s words in Acts 8:24.

Could be that there is sarcasm directed toward the 3 and an appeal to those other witnesses (assuming there are others there).

3 “For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food. 4 “Let us choose for ourselves what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good.

For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food is almost an exact quotation of the words of Job in 12:11. There these words were in the form of a question. Here they are a statement. In both passages the point is that the tongue distinguishes between good and bad tastes, and the ear does the same in distinguishing between what is wise and what is not wise. [UBS Handbook]

We have heard this proverb before, at 12:11, from Job’s mouth. But it was not Job’s proverb; it was a thought he was attributing, by way of parody, to the friends—a blindingly obvious observation that just as the mouth serves not just for eating but also for tasting and rejecting unwholesome food, so too the ear is not just for receiving words but for judging and discriminating among the words that reach it. If Job, in irony, thinks this is the deepest wisdom his friends can come up with, then Elihu proves how right he is. [Clines]

Elihu invited the others to join him in a mutual search for “justice/right,” *mîšpāṭ*, and “good,” *ṭôb*. It is a rhetorical device that God himself used in Isa 1:18, “Come, let us reason together.” [Robert L. Alden]

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

VERSES 34:5-9

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

5 “For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, But God has taken away my right; 6 Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’ 7 “What man is like Job, Who drinks up derision like water, 8 Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, And walks with wicked men? 9 “For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing When he is pleased with God.’

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

5 For Job has said, ‘I am in the right, and God has taken away my right; 6 in spite of my right I am counted a liar; my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’ 7 What man is like Job, who drinks up scoffing like water, 8 who travels in company with evildoers and walks with wicked men? 9 For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God.’

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

5 For Job has declared, “I am righteous, yet God has deprived me of justice. 6 Would I lie about my case? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.” 7 What man is like Job? He drinks derision like water. 8 He keeps company with evildoers and walks with wicked men. 9 For he has said, “A man gains nothing when he becomes God’s friend.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

5 “Job says, ‘I am innocent, but God denies me justice. 6 Although I am right, I am considered a liar; although I am guiltless, his arrow inflicts an incurable wound.’ 7 Is there anyone like Job, who drinks scorn like water? 8 He keeps company with evildoers; he associates with the wicked. 9 For he says, ‘There is no profit in trying to please God.’

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

5 “For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, but God has taken away my right; 6 should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’

In 9:15, 20 Job claims his innocence by saying “though I am innocent...” And God has taken away my right is exactly what Job said in 27:2. Cf. 9:21, 13:18, 27:5-6; 32:9.

My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression: my wound translates “my arrow,” which is generally understood to be the poetic use of the instrument for wounding in place of the result. In 6:4 Job says “The arrows of the Almighty are in me.” His wound is incurable and so leads to death. [UBS Handbook]

Verse 6 seems to be more of a paraphrase of Job's cumulative words. Go with the ESV translation: "in spite of my right I am counted a liar; my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression."

7 "What man is like Job, who drinks up derision like water,

Who drinks up scoffing like water? quotes 15:16b almost to the word. There Eliphaz said it of mankind in general, but here Elihu applies it strictly to Job. [UBS Handbook]

New English Bible: "Was there ever a man like Job with his thirst for irreverent talk?"

Job certainly was subjected to "scorn," but it did not move him from his position. Like our expression "water off a duck's back," so he "drinks scorn like water" (cf. 15:16), that is, he is impermeable to criticism. [Robert L. Alden]

8 Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men?

Walks vs. talks. Not that Job walks with such men, but his speech sets him apart as one who talks like such men. He is "as" such, much as his wife was speaking "as" foolish.

9 "For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing when he is pleased with God.'

[HCSB] For he has said, "A man gains nothing when he becomes God's friend."

For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God' does not quote Job but may represent Job's opinion. In 9:22–24 Job said that calamity falls on the good and the bad without distinction. In 21:7–13 he argued that the wicked prosper. The thought is expressed in Malachi 3:14 that it is useless to serve God. Elihu attributes the same attitude to Job. [UBS Handbook]

It is true that Job has said, in two classic passages at least, that there is no reward for good or punishment for evil: in 9:22 he has said that God destroys both righteous and wicked alike, and in 21:7 that the wicked live to a ripe old age and are not cut off for their sins. In the one place, that sounds as if there is no profit in religion because there is no profit anywhere, in the other as if there is no profit in religion because there is no retributive punishment anywhere. Either way, Elihu's report of Job's theology seems fair. Yet it is this same Job who has also described the wicked as those who say, "What gain shall we have if we pray to him?" (21:15). [Clines, 771]

Much like Job's words:

9:29–31 29 "I am accounted wicked, Why then should I toil in vain? 30 "If I should wash myself with snow And cleanse my hands with lye, 31 Yet You would plunge me into the pit, And my own clothes would abhor me.

Asaph in Psalm 73:13 felt similarly “until he entered the sanctuary of the Lord”:

Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure And washed my hands in innocence;

Job will also “change his mind.” Question: “Is it worth it to know and serve the Lord?”

Note Calvin on the miserable lives of the Patriarchs in the Institutes.

VERSES 34:10-11

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

10 “Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to do wrong. 11 “For He pays a man according to his work, And makes him find it according to his way.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

10 “Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding: far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong. 11 For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

10 Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding. It is impossible for God to do wrong, and for the Almighty to act unjustly. 11 For He repays a person according to his deeds, and He brings his ways on him.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

10 “So listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong. 11 He repays everyone for what they have done; he brings on them what their conduct deserves.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

10 “Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do wrong.

The same response as Paul’s (Rom 9:14): “Is there injustice with God? By no means (μη̄ γένοιτο!)” “Far be it from” is found also in Genesis 18:25. Cf. trusting God with the eternal destiny of our loved ones (note Mormonism and proxy baptism; Romanism and Purgatory). An unjust God would be as illogical as a square circle or a round triangle.

Men of understanding is literally “men of heart” and will be repeated in verse 34. The “heart” is the seat of intelligence in Hebrew thought. In verse 1 Elihu appealed to the “wise” and the “learned,” and now he invites the “intelligent men,” or as TEV says, “men who understand.” Elihu is no doubt continuing to speak with sarcasm in addressing the friends, and translators should reflect this, as in verse 1. [UBS Handbook]

“Understanding,” unlike the “understanding” of v. 16, is lēbāb, “heart,” a broad term that refers not only to emotions, but also to intellect. [Robert L. Alden]

Elihu emphasized that God is sovereign, and a sovereign God can be indicted by no law or judged by no court. The king can do no wrong. God was not appointed to His throne, so He can't be taken from it (Job 34:13). To say that God is unjust is to say that He is not God and therefore has no right to be on the throne. But God controls our very breath and can take our lives away in an instant (vv. 14–15; Acts 17:25, 28). “It is because of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not” (Lam. 3:22). [Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 133]

11 “For He pays a man according to his work, and makes him find it according to his way.

Reaping and sowing cf. with final judgement. Gal. 6:7; cf. Rev. 20:12-13. Titus 3:5. 2 Cor. 5:10. Rom. 2:6. Note my notes on being justified by faith, judged according to works.

For according to the work of a man he will requite him: this verse sets out Elihu’s principle of justice, according to which God acts justly and pays a person according to what he has done. This thought is expressed similarly in Romans 2:6 and Matthew 16:27. The same thesis is argued by Bildad in chapter 8. Job asks in 21:31 “who requites him (the wicked) for what he has done?” The work of a man refers to “all that a person does.” [UBS Handbook]

VERSES 34:12-15

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

12 “Surely, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty will not pervert justice. 13 “Who gave Him authority over the earth? And who has laid on Him the whole world? 14 “If He should determine to do so, If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, 15 All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

12 Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice. 13 Who gave him charge over the earth, and who laid on him the whole world? 14 If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, 15 all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

12 Indeed, it is true that God does not act wickedly and the Almighty does not pervert justice. 13 Who gave Him authority over the earth? Who put Him in charge of the entire world? 14 If He put His mind to it and withdrew the spirit and breath He gave, 15 every living thing would perish together and mankind would return to the dust.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

12 It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice. 13 Who appointed him over the earth? Who put him in charge of the whole world? 14 If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath, 15 all humanity would perish together and mankind would return to the dust.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

12 “Surely, God will not act wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice.

“[Elihu] opens with a double asseveration אִף־אִמְנָם “indeed, assuredly” (which occurs elsewhere only at 19:4; Gen 18:13).” [Clines]

God’s character is reflected in how others behave:

Proverbs 17:15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

In verse 12 Elihu restates his axiom, prefaced by “Of a truth” for emphasis; he implies this idea is unthinkable. This raises the question of why it is unthinkable, why this axiom is true. In verses 13-15 Elihu gives perhaps the most deeply theological core of his

answer: it is unthinkable because God is God! His government of the world is not a responsibility delegated to him by some superior deity . . . no one put him in charge of the world. . . . But God is God; he is the supreme Governor of the world. If he is not just, then there can be no such thing as justice; but (by implication) the very existence of our ideas of justice mean that justice exists and must reside with the supreme God. [Ash, 347]

13 **“Who gave Him authority over the earth? And who has laid on Him the whole world?”**

God is answerable to no one, Job says so in 9:12. He went on to conclude that God is responsible for all injustices (9:24).

27:2 (Job) “As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has embittered my soul,”

Cf. “who died and left you boss?”

By what standard; God’s World, God’s Rules. Potter and clay analogy:

Isaiah 29:16 You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made would say to its maker, “He did not make me”; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?

Isaiah 45:9 “Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker— An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands’?”

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.

Romans 9:21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

The sentence can make sense in the context only if we understand that God’s undisputed sovereignty over the world ensures that whatever he wants to happen does happen, and thus, implicitly, that if some humans are rewarded and some are punished, that is God’s implementation of his ruling principle of retribution. [Clines]

God is Ex Lex.

14 **“If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, 15 all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.”**

It would be more complete to say “If God should decide to take back the spirit and breath of life.” This thought corresponds closely to that of Psalm 104:29; Ecclesiastes 12:7. “Breath of life” may also be rendered “his breath that gives people life” or “his breath that causes people to live.” [UBS Handbook]

Psalm 104:29 You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire
And return to their dust.

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his
nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Acts 17:28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said,
'For we also are His children.' Cf. Col. 1:16-17.

Elihu cited several evidences in support of His unflinching justice. (1) God gives man what he deserves, meting out punishment for sin (34:11). (2) For God to do wrong (v. 10) or pervert justice (cf. 8:3) would be inconsistent with His character and therefore unthinkable (34:12). (3) Having independent authority as the world's Sovereign, no one could influence Him away from justice (v. 13). (4) As the Sustainer of human life God, if He wished, could withdraw His spirit (or "Spirit," NIV marg.) and breath instantly and everyone would perish at once (cf. 12:10; 27:3; 33:4), but in His goodness to mankind He does not do that. (5) If God were unjust, how could He govern the world? (v. 17) To accuse the just ... One of injustice is obviously wrong. (6) God does not hesitate to judge incapable and wicked kings ... nobles ... princes, and the rich. Partiality on God's part is out of the question because He is not influenced by men's power or money. All are equal under Him as the work of His hands. In fact God can quickly, even by surprise at midnight (cf. v. 25), bring the wicked to death and remove the mighty (cf. v. 24). How, then, could Job say God is unfair? . . . (7) God has all the facts in every case, for in His omniscience He sees everything everyone does (v. 21; cf. 24:23) so sinners cannot escape His judging by hiding in the darkness. Unlike human judges, God has no need to investigate cases (34:23; cf. Zophar's words in 11:11). God can put down the mighty (cf. 34:20) and set up others in their place, overthrowing and crushing them in the night (cf. v. 20). (8) God is fair for He does not overlook wickedness. His eyes are on the ways of men (v. 21) recalls Job's similar words in 24:23. God punishes those who reject and disregard Him and who mistreat the poor and the needy (34:26–28). (9) God's justice is seen in that, even though He may choose for a while to do nothing about sin and to remain silent to Job's and others' pleas for speedy justice, yet He as the Sovereign Ruler over man and nation alike will see that a godless man (*hānēp*, "irreligious person"; cf. 8:13) does not continue indefinitely and triumph endlessly (34:29–30). Job might not see God when He chose to remain silent (cf. Job's complaint along that line, 23:8–9) but that did not give him the right to condemn God (cf. 19:7; 30:20). [BKC]

Cf. common grace and supporting texts.

From an ecological point of view, it is breathable air that sustains all life on earth. From a theological point of view, it is God's mercy that sustains the life of rebellious humanity. Imagine an uninhabited earth. [Robert L. Alden]

Elihu continues to wax eloquent on the loftiness of God in 34:13–15. He affirms that God is not a contingent being (not accountable or dependent on another). In theological terms, he is asserting God's aseity (his existence has its source only in himself). Conversely, human beings are absolutely and totally contingent (34:14–15). If God withdrew from us, we would cease to exist. Elihu's affirmations of God's aseity and humanity's contingency contribute to his case in that they establish rank priority: God does not need us but we need him; God is not accountable to us but we are accountable to him. Consequently we do not surpass God in his attributes, including that of his justice. [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 358–359]

VERSES 34:16-17

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

16 “But if you have understanding, hear this; Listen to the sound of my words. 17 “Shall one who hates justice rule? And will you condemn the righteous mighty One,

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

16 “If you have understanding, hear this; listen to what I say. 17 Shall one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty,

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

16 If you have understanding, hear this; listen to what I have to say. 17 Could one who hates justice govern the world? Will you condemn the mighty Righteous One,

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

16 “If you have understanding, hear this; listen to what I say. 17 Can someone who hates justice govern? Will you condemn the just and mighty One?”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

16 **“But if you have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words.**

Elihu uses the singular, so he is speaking directly to Job.

Cf. 33:8 where Elihu uses the same terms of his hearing the three: “Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of your words.”

17 **“Shall one who hates justice rule? And will you condemn the righteous mighty One,**

Expected response from Job would be emphatic “no!”

God as “mighty One.”

40:8 (God to Job) “Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?”

“The center of his thesis is this: rectitude is bound up in the notion of sovereignty.” [Clines]

God is King. He is the standard of what it means to be an absolute, good, righteous King.

VERSES 34:18-19

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

18 Who says to a king, 'Worthless one,' To nobles, 'Wicked ones'; 19 Who shows no partiality to princes Nor regards the rich above the poor, For they all are the work of His hands?

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

18 who says to a king, 'Worthless one,' and to nobles, 'Wicked man,' 19 who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

18 who says to a king, "Worthless man!" and to nobles, "Wicked men!"? 19 God is not partial to princes and does not favor the rich over the poor, for they are all the work of His hands.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

18 Is he not the One who says to kings, 'You are worthless,' and to nobles, 'You are wicked,' 19 who shows no partiality to princes and does not favor the rich over the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

18 Who says to a king, 'Worthless one,' to nobles, 'Wicked ones';

For a subject to address a king as "worthless" was punishable by death (2 Sam 16:7, 9; 1 Kgs 2:8). God has that right.

Nobles: Referred to in 21:28 as "princes." "The equivalent in many languages is "chief" and "elders," or "headman" and "old men." [UBS Handbook]

God is far above criticism himself, for he is the one who makes criticisms. It is his role to evaluate others, even rulers, not to be evaluated himself. His rank as supreme governor entitles him to judge (when necessary, of course) even kings as scoundrels. . . . The implication would be that Job is out of order in alleging that God is unjust, since not even of a human ruler should such a criticism be made. If this is what Elihu really says, it would certainly make his dismay at Job's accusation of God even more intelligible.
[Clines]

6 Listen therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, O judges of the ends of the earth. 2 Give ear, you that rule over multitudes, and boast of many nations. 3 For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High; he will search out your works and inquire into your plans. 4 Because as servants of his kingdom you did

not rule rightly, or keep the law, or walk according to the purpose of God, 5 he will come upon you terribly and swiftly, because severe judgment falls on those in high places. 6 For the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy, but the mighty will be mightily tested. 7 For the Lord of all will not stand in awe of anyone, or show deference to greatness; because he himself made both small and great, and he takes thought for all alike. 8 But a strict inquiry is in store for the mighty. 9 To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed, so that you may learn wisdom and not transgress. [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Wis 6:1–9]

On righteousness and wisdom as a mark of rulers, cf. also Prov 8:15–16; 16:10, 12–13; 20:8.

Rom. 13:1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Why should rulers or law makers make righteous laws if God is not Himself righteous—and the standard for such?

19 who shows no partiality to princes nor regards the rich above the poor, for they all are the work of His hands?

Creator-creature distinction, the great equalizer.

Who shows no partiality to princes translates “does not lift up the face of princes.” [UBS Handbook] Cf. 11:15.

2 Chronicles 19:7 “Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.”

VERSES 34:20

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

20 “In a moment they die, and at midnight People are shaken and pass away, And the mighty are taken away without a hand.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

20 In a moment they die; at midnight the people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away by no human hand.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

20 They die suddenly in the middle of the night; people shudder, then pass away. Even the mighty are removed without effort.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

20 They die in an instant, in the middle of the night; the people are shaken and they pass away; the mighty are removed without human hand.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

20 “In a moment they die, and at midnight people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away without a hand.

“they” = cf. v. 20. Likely rulers.

The image of these unjust rulers being cut off from life “at midnight” . . . inevitably recalls another biblical occasion of sudden midnight death, at the hands of the angel of the Lord: the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn (Exod 11:4; cf. the slaughter “in the night” of 185,000 Assyrian troops, also by the angel of the Lord, in 2 Kgs 19:35). [Clines]

The horror of the destruction of the wicked is made more intense by the fact that it happens without notice, “in an instant,” and at a time when least expected, “in the middle of the night” (Matt 25:6; Luke 17:34; 1 Thess 5:3). Most understand “people” to be the “nobles,” “princes,” and “rich” of the preceding lines (cf. 12:2), where “people” is used in that sense). The word “hand” links vv. 19–20. All people are made by God’s “hand”; and without a (human) “hand,” that is, by God’s hand, they perish. As sovereign he controls the beginning and the end of life. Our times also are in his hands (Ps 31:15a [16a]).
[Robert L. Alden]

VERSES 34:21-25

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

21 “For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps. 22 “There is no darkness or deep shadow Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. 23 “For He does not need to consider a man further, That he should go before God in judgment. 24 “He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, And sets others in their place. 25 “Therefore He knows their works, And He overthrows them in the night, And they are crushed.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

21 “For his eyes are on the ways of a man, and he sees all his steps. 22 There is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves. 23 For God has no need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment. 24 He shatters the mighty without investigation and sets others in their place. 25 Thus, knowing their works, he overturns them in the night, and they are crushed.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

21 For His eyes watch over a man’s ways, and He observes all his steps. 22 There is no darkness, no deep darkness, where evildoers can hide themselves. 23 God does not need to examine a person further, that one should approach Him in court. 24 He shatters the mighty without an investigation and sets others in their place. 25 Therefore, He recognizes their deeds and overthrows them by night, and they are crushed.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

21 “His eyes are on the ways of mortals; he sees their every step. 22 There is no deep shadow, no utter darkness, where evildoers can hide. 23 God has no need to examine people further, that they should come before him for judgment. 24 Without inquiry he shatters the mighty and sets up others in their place. 25 Because he takes note of their deeds, he overthrows them in the night and they are crushed.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

In 34:21–30 we find the next stage of Elihu’s case for God. He begins by affirming God’s omniscience, particularly as it relates to his omnipresence. God has access to every place, and thus, in his role as judge, he has immediate access to all pieces of evidence. He is omniscient and has no need to gather information, no need for research, testimony, or trial (“no need to examine,” 34:23; “without inquiry,” 34:24). [NIV Application Commentary: Job]

21 “For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps.

Although the language of vv 21–30 may seem to apply to humans generally, it becomes plain that Elihu is thinking primarily, if not exclusively, of the “mighty” who have offended against the divine will. Thus we read of “a man” (שׂוֹרֵר) in vv 21 and 23 and of “evildoers” . . . in v 22, but it is not humanity at large that is Elihu’s focus: it is rather the “mighty” . . . visible in v 24, that are his concern, the mighty as contrasted with the “poor” (לָוִי) and the “afflicted” . . . of v 28. And the “godless reprobate” of v 30, whom God prevents from ensnaring a whole people like a wild animal in a trap, is not just any evildoer, but specifically one of God’s subordinate rulers who has disregarded God’s ways (v 27). [Clines]

Whether deliberately or not, in this verse Elihu is borrowing the words of Job. In saying that God’s eyes are upon the ways of humans, he virtually cites Job at 24:23, though there Job had been speaking of God’s apparent concern for the prosperity of the wicked (Job has been much occupied with God as the “Human-Watcher,” as he calls him in 7:20). In saying that God sees all the steps of humans, he is again using Job’s language, at 31:4 (cf. also 34:21; 14:16), where they were Job’s steps that were being scrutinized by God, in the same sense as Elihu has in mind here. On human steps as watched by God, a wisdom motif, cf. Pss 33:13; 69:5 (6); 94:11; 119:168; 139:1–4; Prov 5:21. [Clines]

22 “There is no darkness or deep shadow where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Cf. Psalm 139:11–12; Jeremiah 23:24.

23 “For He does not need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment. 24 “He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, and sets others in their place.

He shatters the mighty without investigation: shatters translates a verb meaning “to break to pieces.” It is used in Isaiah 24:19 (“utterly broken”) and Psalm 2:9 (“break”). When applied to persons it refers to causing their downfall . . . And sets others in their place explains what God does after he has broken the mighty in line a. Sets others means he “installs, appoints, gives their positions” to other people. [UBS Handbook]

Daniel 2:21 “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

25 “Therefore He knows their works, and He overthrows them in the night, and they are crushed.

25–28 Little new is added in these verses, which are essentially a recapitulation of the content of vv 20–24. God knows their works (v 25a = v 21), he overturns them (v 25b = shaken, v 20b, shattered, v 24a), in the night (v 25b = at midnight, v 20b), they are crushed (v 25b = shattered, v 24a). He strikes them (v 26a = shattered, v 24a) for their

wickedness (v 26a = evildoers, v 22; cf. v 18), in public view (v 26b = they are replaced by other rulers, v 24b). They turned from following God and had no regard for his ways (v 27 = evildoers, v 22). Only in v 28, where the wicked rulers are viewed as oppressing the poor, who then call upon God for redress, do we find new material. [Clines]

VERSES 34:26-28

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

26 “He strikes them like the wicked In a public place, 27 Because they turned aside from following Him, And had no regard for any of His ways; 28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him, And that He might hear the cry of the afflicted—

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

26 He strikes them for their wickedness in a place for all to see, 27 because they turned aside from following him and had no regard for any of his ways, 28 so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to him, and he heard the cry of the afflicted—

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

26 In full view of the public, He strikes them for their wickedness, 27 because they turned aside from following Him and did not understand any of His ways 28 but caused the poor to cry out to Him, and He heard the outcry of the afflicted.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

26 He punishes them for their wickedness where everyone can see them, 27 because they turned from following him and had no regard for any of his ways. 28 They caused the cry of the poor to come before him, so that he heard the cry of the needy.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

26 “He strikes them like the wicked in a public place, 27 Because they turned aside from following Him, and had no regard for any of His ways; 28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him, and that He might hear the cry of the afflicted—

This is the third verse (26) in a row describing with different verbs what God will do to the wicked (cf. vv. 23-25).

Here is the specific point in which these unjust rulers have disregarded God’s ways: their actions have caused the cry of the poor to ascend to heaven, which means that they have been wronging the poor. [Clines]

. . . he will judge publicly, “in a place for all to see” (v. 26). There will be nothing secretive about his judgment. When men and women turn “aside from following him” (v. 27) and therefore become agents of social injustice (v. 28), he will give them the punishment they deserve, and he will do so publicly, so that the whole universe will see his justice. [Ash, 349]

Verse 27 - we as a nation have turned aside from following Him.

VERSES 34:29-30

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

29 When He keeps quiet, who then can condemn? And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him, That is, in regard to both nation and man?— 30 So that godless men would not rule Nor be snares of the people.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

29 When he is quiet, who can condemn? When he hides his face, who can behold him, whether it be a nation or a man?— 30 that a godless man should not reign, that he should not ensnare the people.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

29 But when God is silent, who can declare Him guilty? When He hides His face, who can see Him? Yet He watches over both individuals and nations, 30 so that godless men should not rule or ensnare the people.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

29 But if he remains silent, who can condemn him? If he hides his face, who can see him? Yet he is over individual and nation alike, 30 to keep the godless from ruling, from laying snares for the people.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

29 When He keeps quiet, who then can condemn? And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him, that is, in regard to both nation and man?— 30 so that godless men would not rule nor be snares of the people.

Job, in 13:24, accuses God of “hiding his face” from him. Cf. 23:9. Here God may seem aloof in judging rulers or rescuing those oppressed by them.

One prerogative of God’s oversight of the world is the appointment of kings and leaders, but this verse suggests he prevents the “godless man from ruling” and somehow thwarts those who would trap the common people. Insofar as the verse speaks of government, it connects with v. 29c. Has Elihu never seen or heard of a wicked king, an unjust judge, or a deceitful leader? [Robert L. Alden]

God will judge even if He delays and demonstrates his patience and mercy. Cf. 2 Peter 3:9.

VERSES 34:31-33

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

31 “For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne chastisement; I will not offend anymore; 32 Teach me what I do not see; If I have done iniquity, I will not do it again’? 33 “Shall He recompense on your terms, because you have rejected it? For you must choose, and not I; Therefore declare what you know.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

31 “For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne punishment; I will not offend any more; 32 teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more’? 33 Will he then make repayment to suit you, because you reject it? For you must choose, and not I; therefore declare what you know.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

31 Suppose someone says to God, “I have endured my punishment; I will no longer act wickedly. 32 Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I won’t do it again.” 33 Should God repay you on your terms when you have rejected His? You must choose, not I! So declare what you know.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

31 “Suppose someone says to God, ‘I am guilty but will offend no more. 32 Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again.’ 33 Should God then reward you on your terms, when you refuse to repent? You must decide, not I; so tell me what you know.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Rowley says about verses 31–37 “These verses are among the most obscure and difficult in the book.” [UBS Handbook]

The difficulties of these verses lie not so much with rare or unknown words but with the way known words are strung together and the multiplicity of meanings that some of them allow. Whatever the specific translation is, the point of this section is a challenge from Elihu to Job to repent.⁷⁷ The invitation to speak what he “knows,” though generous sounding, was rejected because Elihu said in v. 35 that Job spoke “without knowledge.” The student of Job must use with caution the somewhat tentative translation and commentary on these verses. [Robert L. Alden]

31 “For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne chastisement; I will not offend anymore;

For has anyone said to God has an indefinite subject. FRCL translates this line “Let us suppose someone said this to God.” RSV and NEB assume Elihu is thinking in terms of

Job specifically and so introduce direct speech. NJB understands the subject to be the godless ruler from the preceding verse. It is recommended that translators follow either RSV or TEV. [UBS Handbook]

Verse 31 may also be expressed “Has anyone ever said to God, ‘I am a sinner, but I will stop sinning?’ ” or more directly, “Job, have you ever admitted to God that you are a sinner and said you would confess your sins?” [UBS Handbook]

HCSB: 31 Suppose someone says to God, “I have endured my punishment; I will no longer act wickedly.

NIV: 31 “Suppose someone says to God, ‘I am guilty but will offend no more.

32 Teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will not do it again’?

This v. ends the quote of the unnamed person of v. 31. Job?

33 “Shall He recompense on your terms, because you have rejected it? For you must choose, and not I; therefore declare what you know.

The meaning of verse 33 is not easy to unpack. . . . Perhaps we might paraphrase it, “You can’t expect God to roll over and admit you’re right. You must decide to repent of what you have said. You know that’s the right thing to do.” [Ash, 351]

33 Should God repay you on your terms when you have rejected His? You must choose, not I! So declare what you know. [HCSB]

33 Should God then reward you on your terms, when you refuse to repent? You must decide, not I; so tell me what you know. [NIV]

These two lines may be translated, for example, “Since you don’t accept the things God does, do you think God should punish such a person?”

For you must choose, and not I: in other words, “You are the one who has to decide, not me.” Therefore declare what you know: “Let’s hear what you have to say.” Since Job has expressed his disagreement with the way God handles justice (at least in Job’s case), perhaps Job can tell Elihu how God should govern the world. [UBS Handbook]

VERY DIFFICULT

My paraphrase: 31 Suppose someone (like you Job) said to God, “I have endured my suffering; I will no longer offend. 32 If I’m wrong, help me to see, and if I’ve sinned, I will stop.”

Best case scenario: Elihu wants Job to stop misrepresenting God.

Worst case scenario: Elihu is overstating his case here and has fallen prey to the mistake Job’s 3 friends made, assuming Job is suffering because of his sin.”

VERSES 34:34-37

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

34 “Men of understanding will say to me, And a wise man who hears me, 35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge, And his words are without wisdom. 36 ‘Job ought to be tried to the limit, Because he answers like wicked men. 37 ‘For he adds rebellion to his sin; He claps his hands among us, And multiplies his words against God.’ ”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

34 Men of understanding will say to me, and the wise man who hears me will say: 35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge; his words are without insight.’ 36 Would that Job were tried to the end, because he answers like wicked men. 37 For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

34 Reasonable men will say to me, along with the wise men who hear me, 35 “Job speaks without knowledge; his words are without insight.” 36 If only Job were tested to the limit, because his answers are like those of wicked men. 37 For he adds rebellion to his sin; he scornfully claps in our presence, while multiplying his words against God.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

34 “Men of understanding declare, wise men who hear me say to me, 35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight.’ 36 Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost for answering like a wicked man! 37 To his sin he adds rebellion; scornfully he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

34 “Men of understanding will say to me, and a wise man who hears me, 35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge, and his words are without wisdom. 36 ‘Job ought to be tried to the limit, because he answers like wicked men. 37 ‘For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God.’ ”

Men of understanding, cf. v. 10. This is Elihu’s assessment of what a truly wise man would say about Job.

Verse 36 is not a demand that Job suffer more, but that he be “tried” as in a court of law “to the limit” so that he comes to know that he is in the wrong. This happens beginning in chapter 38.

For he adds rebellion to his sin: Elihu has tried to obtain a confession from Job, and this appears now to have failed. Job’s refusal to confess his sin is therefore the rebellion which he adds to his sin of accusing God of acting unjustly. [UBS Handbook]

Translators and commentators are divided over whether we are to hear in these three verses the verdict of the shadowy “men of understanding” (v 34) (so NEB, JB, Hölscher, Fohrer, Gordis, Hesse, Alonso Schökel-Sicre Díaz, Habel, Good), or whether only v 35 is quoted from them, Elihu speaking again in his own voice in vv 36–37 (so RSV, NJPS, Moffatt, Delitzsch, Peake, Dhorme, Terrien, Pope, Rowley, Fedrizzi, Ravasi, de Wilde, Hartley). It makes a good deal of difference whether we ascribe v 36, with its cruel demand that Job should continue to be “tried,” and that “to the utmost,” to Elihu or not. [Clines]

Note how God speaks through suffering in chapter 33. Here Elihu’s “men of understanding” believe that Job has not been listening.

Job has spoken out of ignorance and uttered unwise words (34:35). Elihu sounds almost like Zophar (34:36-37; cf. 11:5-6), but there is an crucial distinction. Zophar mocks Job’s early assertions that his sin is not responsible for his sufferings; he wants Job ransacked, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law because he is certain Job is hiding his sin. That is not Elihu’s argument. Elihu wants Job “tried to the limit because he answers like wicked men” (NASB) — that is, he implies the kinds of things about God that the wicked say outright. Job’s irreverent insinuations add rebellion to his sins by defiantly multiplying his words against God. Elihu has “advanced the discussion by suggesting that Job’s greatest sin may not be something he said or did *before* the suffering started, but the rebellion he is displaying *in* the suffering.” [Talbert, 183. Last quote he cites DA Carson]

Elihu and the Friends deal with sin and suffering from diverse perspectives. While there can be no doubt that Elihu deals severely with Job in the light of the justice and power of God, he does so because Job had impugned God, explicitly as well as by necessary consequence. But that was done during and because of his affliction, and not prior to it (not that his words were any the less grievous on that account!). Whenever the Friends took Job to task for his sins, they were thinking of sins that Job has committed prior to his being afflicted by what of punishment. This was a supposition which they could not validate, whereas Elihu is highlighting sin that he can and does prove. What more, they are sins that Job cannot and does not contest. [Hywel R. Jones, cited in Ash, 352]