

## KEY

Archer = A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Gleason Archer). Chicago: Moody Press, 2007.

Ash = Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

BBC = The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Frame = John Frame, Systematic Theology, P&R Publishing, 2013.

Grudem = Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1994.

Harrison = Introduction to the Old Testament (R.K. Harrison). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

K&D = Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F. in the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.

Swindoll = A Man of Heroic Endurance: Job (Charles Swindoll). Nashville, TN. W Publishing Group, 2004.

Talbert = *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* (Layton Talbert). Bob Jones University Press, 2007.

TWOT = The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; Bruce Waltke). Chicago: Moody Press, 1980. Two Volumes.

Walton = Old Testament Today. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

## Basic English Diagram / Structure

Job 31

- 1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes;  
How then could I gaze at a virgin?
- 2 “And what is the portion of God from above  
Or the heritage of the Almighty from on high?
- 3 “Is it not calamity to the unjust  
And disaster to those who work iniquity?
- 4 “Does He not see my ways  
And number all my steps?
- 5 “If I have walked with falsehood,  
And my foot has hastened after deceit,
- 6 Let Him weigh me with accurate scales,  
And let God know my integrity.
- 7 “If my step has turned from the way,  
Or my heart followed my eyes,  
Or if any spot has stuck to my hands,
- 8 Let me sow and another eat,  
And let my crops be uprooted.
- 9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman,  
Or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway,
- 10 May my wife grind for another,  
And let others kneel down over her.
- 11 “For that would be a lustful crime;  
Moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges.
- 12 “For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon,  
And would uproot all my increase.
- 13 “If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves  
When they filed a complaint against me,
- 14 What then could I do when God arises?  
And when He calls me to account, — what will I answer Him?
- 15 “Did not He who made me in the womb make him,  
And the same one fashion us in the womb?
- 16 “If I have kept the poor from their desire,  
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
- 17 Or have eaten my morsel alone,  
And the orphan has not shared it
- 18 (But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, And from infancy I guided her),
- 19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,  
Or that the needy had no covering,
- 20 If his loins have not thanked me,  
And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep,

21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan,  
Because I saw I had support in the gate,  
22 Let my shoulder fall from the socket,  
And my arm be broken off at the elbow.  
23 “For calamity from God is a terror to me,  
And because of His majesty I can do nothing.  
24 “If I have put my confidence in gold,  
And called fine gold my trust,  
25 If I have gloated because my wealth was great,  
And because my hand had secured so much;  
26 If I have looked at the sun when it shone  
Or the moon going in splendor,  
27 And my heart became secretly enticed,  
And my hand threw a kiss from my mouth,  
28 That too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment,  
For I would have denied God above.  
29 “Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy,  
Or exulted when evil befell him?  
30 “No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin  
By asking for his life in a curse.  
31 “Have the men of my tent not said, ‘Who can find one who has not been satisfied with his  
meat’?  
32 “The alien has not lodged outside,  
For I have opened my doors to the traveler.  
33 “Have I covered my transgressions like Adam,  
By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,  
34 Because I feared the great multitude,  
And the contempt of families terrified me, —And kept silent and did not go out of doors?  
  
35 “Oh that I had one to hear me! — Behold, here is my signature;  
Let the Almighty answer me!  
And the indictment which my adversary has written,  
36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder,  
I would bind it to myself like a crown.  
37 “I would declare to Him the number of my steps;  
Like a prince I would approach Him.  
  
38 “If my land cries out against me,  
And its furrows weep together;  
39 If I have eaten its fruit without money,  
Or have caused its owners to lose their lives,  
40 Let briars grow instead of wheat, And stinkweed instead of barley.”

The words of Job are ended.

## TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

### ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

Job 31 1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin? 2 “And what is the portion of God from above Or the heritage of the Almighty from on high? 3 “Is it not calamity to the unjust And disaster to those who work iniquity? 4 “Does He not see my ways And number all my steps? 5 “If I have walked with falsehood, And my foot has hastened after deceit, 6 Let Him weigh me with accurate scales, And let God know my integrity. 7 “If my step has turned from the way, Or my heart followed my eyes, Or if any spot has stuck to my hands, 8 Let me sow and another eat, And let my crops be uprooted. 9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, Or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway, 10 May my wife grind for another, And let others kneel down over her. 11 “For that would be a lustful crime; Moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges. 12 “For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon, And would uproot all my increase. 13 “If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves When they filed a complaint against me, 14 What then could I do when God arises? And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? 15 “Did not He who made me in the womb make him, And the same one fashion us in the womb? 16 “If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 Or have eaten my morsel alone, And the orphan has not shared it 18 (But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, And from infancy I guided her), 19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or that the needy had no covering, 20 If his loins have not thanked me, And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep, 21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, Because I saw I had support in the gate, 22 Let my shoulder fall from the socket, And my arm be broken off at the elbow. 23 “For calamity from God is a terror to me, And because of His majesty I can do nothing. 24 “If I have put my confidence in gold, And called fine gold my trust, 25 If I have gloated because my wealth was great, And because my hand had secured so much; 26 If I have looked at the sun when it shone Or the moon going in splendor, 27 And my heart became secretly enticed, And my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, 28 That too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, For I would have denied God above. 29 “Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, Or exulted when evil befell him? 30 “No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin By asking for his life in a curse. 31 “Have the men of my tent not said, ‘Who can find one who has not been satisfied with his meat’? 32 “The alien has not lodged outside, For I have opened my doors to the traveler. 33 “Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, By hiding my iniquity in my bosom, 34 Because I feared the great multitude, And the contempt of families terrified me, And kept silent and did not go out of doors? 35 “Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; Let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 “I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him. 38 “If my land cries out against me, And its furrows weep together; 39 If I have eaten its fruit without money, Or have caused its owners to lose their lives, 40 Let briars grow instead of wheat, And stinkweed instead of barley.” The words of Job are ended.

## **PASSAGE OUTLINE:**

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

- II. JOB'S THIRD REPLY TO BILDAD (CHAPS. 26–31)
  - A. Job's description of God's majesty in nature (chap. 26)
  - B. Job's description of the fate of the wicked (chap. 27)
  - C. Job's discussion of God's wisdom (chap. 28)
  - D. Job's concluding soliloquy (chaps. 29–31)
    - 1. Job's past glory (chap. 29)
    - 2. Job's present gloom (chap. 30)
    - 3. Job's oath of innocence (chap. 31)

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

- I. Job Concludes His Final Speech Job 31:1–40
  - A. Job Has Sworn an Oath and Challenges God Job 31:1–6
  - B. Job Swears He Has Avoided Adultery Job 31:7–12
  - C. Job Swears That He Never Wronged the Unfortunate Job 31:13–23
  - D. Job Denies Avarice and Idolatry Job 31:24–28
  - E. Job Denies Revenge, Inhospitability, And Hypocrisy Job 31:29–34
  - F. Job's Final Challenge and Final Oath Job 31:35–40

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

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

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

- I. Introduction (31:1–4)
- II. Disavowal of Falsehood (31:5–8)
- III. Disavowal of Adultery (31:9–12)
- IV. Disavowal of Injustice (31:13–15)
- V. Disavowal of Uncharitableness (31:16–23)
- VI. Disavowal of Materialism and Paganism (31:24–28)
- VII. Disavowal of Meanness and Secret Sin (31:29–34)
- VIII. Conclusion (31:35–37)
- IX. Disavowal of Tenant Farmer Abuse (31:38–40)

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

- I. Job looks ahead for God’s justice (Job 31)
  - A. Job the man (Job 31:1–12)
    - 1. Lust (1-4)
    - 2. Deceit is the second sin that Job denies (vv. 5–8).
    - 3. Adultery (Job 31:9–12)
  - B. Job the employer (Job 31:13–15)
  - C. Job the neighbor (Job 31:16–23, 29–32)
  - D. Job the worshiper (Job 31:24–28)
  - E. Job the steward (Job 31:38–40)

***Job (Charles Swindoll)***

- I. Reflecting on His Past Glory (29:1-3, 6-17, 25)
- II. Rehearsing the Present Misery (30:1, 9-10, 15, 17-22, 26-29, 30-31)
- III. Reaffirming His Personal Integrity (31:1-2, 5-6, 9-11, 13-15, 16-21, 24-25, 28, 35-37)

***Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash)***

- I. The Nature of the Covenant: The Commitment to a Clear Conscience (1-3)
- II. The Keeping of the Covenant: By Faithfulness in the Heart (4-6)
- III. The Outworking of Covenant Faithfulness in Heart and Life (7-34)
  - A. Turning Aside in the Heart (7-8)
  - B. Adultery (9-12)
  - C. Injustice to Servants (13-15)
  - D. Lack of Generosity to the Needy (16-20)
  - E. Violence Against the Defenseless (21-23)
  - F. Trust in Wealth (24-25)
  - G. Idolatry of Heavenly Bodies (26-28)
  - H. Vindictiveness Toward Enemies (29-30)
  - I. Lack of Hospitality to Strangers (31-32)
  - J. Hypocrisy (33-34)
- IV. The Challenge Repeated (35-37)
- V. The Covenant Attested by Creation (38-40)

## **BASIC OUTLINE:**

- I. Job's Past Prosperity (chapter 29)
- II. Job's Present Passion (chapter 30)
- III. Job's Prospective Pardon (chapter 31)

## **PASSAGE OUTLINE:**

- III. Job's Prospective Pardon (chapter 31)
  - A. Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin
    - 1. Sexual Sin: Lust and Adultery (1-4, 9-12)
    - 2. Hypocrisy: A Duplicitous Life (5-8)
    - 3. Prejudice: Air of Superiority (13-15)
    - 4. Social Indifference: Insensitivity (16-23, 31-32)
      - a. To Orphans and Widows (16-23)
      - b. To Aliens (31-32)
    - 5. Materialism: Trust in Wealth (24-25)
    - 6. Idolatry: Worship of Idols (26-28)
    - 7. Vengeance: Hatred of Enemies (29-30)
    - 8. Deceit: Secret Sins and the Fear of Man (33-34)
    - 9. Corruption: Mistreatment of Land and Laborer (38-40a)
  - B. Job Signs His Affidavit (35-37)
  - C. Job's Case is Closed (40b)

## **SERMON OUTLINE:**

- III. Job's Prospective Pardon (chapter 31)
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.

### *Closing Points:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about):** Job's affirms his righteousness

**PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about):** by affirming his innocence from committing specific sins

**PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text):** Job's conscience is clear

**CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON:** Live for the confidence of a clear conscience

**SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE:** Job's Defense Rests (Part 4): Job's Closing Argument

## HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

\*\* See Exegetical Notes from Chapters 27, 28-30 \*\*

THE FINAL CHAPTER OF Job's discourse features an oath of innocence in which he catalogues potential offenses and vows that he is innocent of each. Such an oath presumes that if Job swears falsely, God will be obliged to punish him for both the crime and the false oath.

Ancient Near Eastern literature includes a variety of declarations of innocence. Most are fairly brief, with just a few lines listing denied offenses.<sup>11</sup> In literature from Mesopotamia, the works most frequently cited as similar to Job's oath are the DINGIR.ŠA.DIB.BA incantations and the šurpu incantations. Both texts address an angry god in an attempt to appease his wrath and bring relief to the person suffering. The DINGIR.ŠA.DIB.BA incantations contain lines in which the sufferer claims innocence on certain points (e.g., "I have not held back from him [the deity] the sheep in the pen"), as well as long confessions of sins he is willing to admit (e.g., "I spoke lies ... I coveted your abundant property ... I raised my hand and desecrated what should not so be treated ... I have continually committed iniquities, known and unknown").<sup>12</sup> The šurpu incantations, by contrast, limit their scope to confessions of actual offenses—the opposite of Job's tack.<sup>13</sup> Besides the incantations a negative confession can be found in ritual texts. In the Babylonian New Year's festival (Akitu), the king expresses his eligibility for renewed kingship by narrating his care for Babylon and the temple and its rites, including proper treatment of subordinates.<sup>14</sup>

The most extensive ancient Near Eastern claim of innocence is found in spell 125 in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. The spell lists forty-two denied offenses, each addressed to one of the forty-two gods who will decide whether the deceased will enter the next life. The list<sup>15</sup> incorporates a wide variety of behaviors:

1. I have not done wrong.
2. I have not robbed.
3. I have not stolen.
4. I have not slain people.
5. I have not destroyed food offerings.
6. I have not reduced measures.
7. I have not stolen the god's property.
8. I have not told lies.
9. I have not stolen food.
10. I was not sullen.
11. I have not fornicated with the fornicator.
12. I have not caused anyone to weep.
13. I have not dissembled.
14. I have not transgressed.
15. I have not done grain-profiteering.
16. I have not robbed a parcel of land.

17. I have not discussed secrets.
18. I have brought no lawsuits.
19. I have not disputed at all about property.
20. I have not had intercourse with a married woman.
21. I have not wrongly copulated.
22. I have not struck terror.
23. I have not transgressed.
24. I have not been hot-tempered.
25. I have not been neglectful of truthful words.
26. I have not made disturbance.
27. I have not cursed.
28. I have not been violent.
29. I have not confounded truth.
30. I have not been impatient.
31. I have not discussed.
32. I have not been garrulous about matters.
33. I have not done evil.
34. I have not disputed the king.
35. I have not waded in the water.
36. My voice was not loud.
37. I have not cursed a god.
38. I have not made extolling.
39. I have not harmed the bread ration of the gods.
40. I have not stolen the Khenef-cakes from the Blessed.
41. I have not stolen Hefnu-cakes of a youth, nor have I fettered the god of my town.
42. I have not slain sacred cattle.

[John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 318–319]

The Egyptian list is magical in nature and serves to ensure passage to the afterlife. Job's list is legal and attempts to secure vindication in this life. [John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 321]

Job's renunciation of evil is similar in many respects to the negative confession from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. In this work an individual after death is presented before the judgment seat of Osiris where he recites a lengthy list of forty-two sins that he did not commit. The list includes lying, theft, murder, killing the sacred bull, eavesdropping, homosexuality, being disruptive, talking loud, being impatient and conjuring against a god, just to give a range of examples. Even more to the point, in a Hittite prayer to the Storm-god for relief from suffering, Kantuzilis declares his innocence of a list of items (breaking oaths, eating forbidden things, withholding sacrifices). This oath has clearly put Job in the position of defendant. A declaration of innocence was a common element in legal proceedings that were being appealed to a judge for a public hearing. Since it was

often impossible to gather sufficient evidence in this type of court case, the swearing of an oath took on great significance. Up until this point Job has been distressed that God has been silent. By swearing to this oath of innocence, Job hopes to turn any continued silence to his advantage. If God ignores his oath it will be tacit admission of Job's innocence. [Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Job 31:1–40]

In this passage,

Job calls not only on El Shaddai to answer him (although he may not expect an answer), but also on anyone who wishes to contest his claims of innocence. Job employs legal language here; any potential litigant (*'iš ribi*; NIV: “accuser”) must submit a formal claim (indictment). If no one, divine or mortal, steps forward with such a claim, Job will have secured his vindication and, consequently, the possibility of reintegration into society. In anticipation of that positive outcome, Job uses royal imagery (“prince” and “crown”) to describe his willingness and ability to give full account for his actions. Job is no cringing defendant; he will receive any challenge with confident assurance of his innocence. [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 329]

Ash writes that the Egyptian Book of the Dead (a collection of books/writings/drawings accompanied bodies on their way to the afterlife. Therein is an image of the judgement scene showing the heart of the deceased being weighed against a feather. This is an image of truth or justice. A heart too heavy with sin cannot pass through to the blessed afterlife unless the gods be deceived by magic spells. [cf. Ash 311]

Underlying this entire section that encompasses Job's Defense, the question: “Why does God allow the righteous to suffer?” Job falls prey to the absolute worldview of the day (cf. v. 3).

At the end of this section we could almost hope to go right into God's response in chapter 38. However, we have the words of Elihu to contend with first in chapters 32-37).

As Job's final speech now moves into its third movement, the tone changes dramatically. In the first movement (chap. 29) he had been nostalgic, in the second (chap. 30) bitter, but now in the third he rises again to the challenge his treatment by God has set him. Here the tone is from the beginning a more confident, more aggressive one. Now he will take matters into his own hand with an oath of exculpation, which will testify that there is no reason in himself for God's attack on him, and that, by implication, God has acted arbitrarily or even unjustly toward him. [David J. A. Clines, *Job 21–37*, vol. 18a, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 1011]

Courtroom language — Job signs an affidavit.

The seven areas he treats are: deceit (vv 5–8), adultery (vv 9–12), disregard of servants (vv 13–15), disregard of the poor (vv 16–23), trust in wealth (vv 24–28), rejoicing at the

misfortune of others (vv 29–34), and assault on the land (vv 38–40b). [David J. A. Clines, 1012]

There is some debate over the exact number of sins Job declares himself innocent of. Fohrer finds twelve: lust (vv 1–4), deceit (5–6), greed (7–8), adultery (9–12), injustice towards slaves (13–15), hardheartedness toward the poor (16–23), trust in possessions (24–25), false worship (26–28), hatred of an enemy (29–30), inhospitality (31–32), insincerity (33–34), and exploitation of the land (38–40). De Wilde also has twelve, but by a different method of counting: he omits lust and adds injustice in the gate (21–22). Gordis has fourteen, adding lack of pity for the traveler (19–20) and perversion of justice for the widow and orphan (21–23) (he headlines vv 5–6 cheating in business, and 38–40 the expropriation of the land of others). Hartley also finds fourteen sins, a numeric symbol of double perfection, by adding lust (1–4) and failure to clothe the poor (19–20). Hölscher too has fourteen, and Andersen can see sixteen different crimes, Ceresko, ten. Good would rather speak of fifteen curses. The number of the sins, and the distinction of one from the other, are of little consequence; what really matters is the sense of comprehensiveness the listing conveys. [David J. A. Clines, 1013]

Note possible parallels to the Sermon on the Mount, and how some of Job’s sins are those of the heart (Eg. lust, trusting in wealth).

It does not undermine the dramatic logic of the poem if in the course of this last speech we come to modify our view of Job the man. In his previous speeches we have seen him in the midst of his grief, and the figure he has cut has been hugely sympathetic as he has tried to wrest justice from a distant and unresponsive God. Now in these chapters we are given more than a glimpse of the Job of the days before the book opened, and heard from his own lips what it was like to be “blameless and upright,” as the opening sentence of the book had certified him. [David J. A. Clines, 1037–1038]

Chiastic structure that undergirds the over flow of the chapter (as per Ash):

- A Covenant made (1-3)
- B Challenge given (4-6)
- C catalog of covenant faithfulness (7-34)
- B Challenge repeated (35-37)
- A Covenant attested (38-40)

Protasis / Apodosis (If / Then) Structure (affirmation of innocence / self-imprecation)

Often this is in the form of 1) Sin stated; 2) judgment if guilty; 3) reason for judgment (as in vv. 9-12). IF / THEN / FOR

**\*VERSES 31:1-3\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? 2 “And what is the portion of God from above or the heritage of the Almighty from on high? 3 “Is it not calamity to the unjust and disaster to those who work iniquity?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? 2 What would be my portion from God above and my heritage from the Almighty on high? 3 Is not calamity for the unrighteous, and disaster for the workers of iniquity?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

1 I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I look at a young woman? 2 For what portion would I have from God above, or what inheritance from the Almighty on high? 3 Doesn't disaster come to the unjust and misfortune to evildoers?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

1 “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman. 2 For what is our lot from God above, our heritage from the Almighty on high? 3 Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong?”

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

**1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? 2 “And what is the portion of God from above or the heritage of the Almighty from on high? 3 “Is it not calamity to the unjust and disaster to those who work iniquity?”**

Definition of a “covenant” — a legal agreement with stipulations. Unilateral vs. Bilateral covenants.

Covenant is a formal “agreement, treaty, pact” between two parties, in which each assumes some obligation. In the Old Testament covenants were made between God and Abraham, Laban and Jacob, David and Jonathan, as well as between husband and wife, and between nations. In verse 1 Job says he has made such a treaty or agreement with my eyes. Since the usage is metaphorical, we need not ask what obligation his eyes undertook. [William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 560]

Job 31:1 opens with reference to a covenant. The noun and verb here are the standard Old Testament terminology for making a covenant. These two occur with the preposition used

here about twenty-five times; in most cases the object of the preposition designates the other party in the covenant. We would furthermore expect that both parties would be named in a covenant context. All of this suggests that Job's eyes are being treated as vassals brought under a suzerain's control. [The NIV Application Commentary: Job, 321]

Made a covenant translates a Hebrew phrase which is literally "cut a covenant," as demonstrated in Genesis 15:7–21. There Abraham cut animals into two parts, and the covenantor (the Lord) passed between the halves of the animals. The probable implication was "May I be cut in half like these animals if I fail to keep my promise." [William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 560]

See the preceding paragraphs for the argument that leads to this conclusion:

In light of this discussion, Job's covenant regarding his eyes cannot be interpreted as a commitment to asceticism, because he already has a wife (as noted not only in ch. 2, but also in 31:10). The logical alternative is that the statement concerns the acquisition of a harem. A large harem was an indicator of power and status in the ancient world. Job eschews amassing multiple wives and concubines, and he characterizes this decision as a covenant regarding his eyes in order to underscore the point that he is not even "on the prowl." This avowal mirrors his statement in 31:24–25 that he is not absorbed in the pursuit of wealth. Job has undertaken neither a vow of poverty nor a vow of chastity, but rather avoids the obsessive pursuit of prestige. This interpretation takes account of each word choice the author has made and therefore presents the most likely interpretation. Accordingly, the verse has nothing to do with sexual ethics, as important as they may be. Instead, it accords with Job's many pronouncements that he has not attempted to consolidate or abuse his power—tempting actions for a person in his position (cf. Samuel's lecture in 1 Sam. 8:11–17 regarding the tactics of a king building a power base). [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 323]

Common idea in the Hebrew Bible that sin proceeds from the eyes; cf. Gen 3:6; 2 Sam 11:2; Ps 119:37; Eccles 14:10.

Virgin in English refers to a young woman who has not had sexual relations; the Hebrew term, however, refers more often than not to an unmarried woman. [UBS Handbook Series, 560]

Verse 2 is a question (related to God's economy) answered by the rhetorical question in v. 3. However, Job thinks that calamity befalls the unrighteous in this life, just as blessing befalls the righteous in this life. The problem is that Job views calamity and blessing in temporal terms. Again, see Asaph in Psalm 73.

**\*VERSES 31:4-8\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

4 “Does He not see my ways and number all my steps? 5 “If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened after deceit, 6 let Him weigh me with accurate scales, and let God know my integrity. 7 “If my step has turned from the way, or my heart followed my eyes, or if any spot has stuck to my hands, 8 let me sow and another eat, and let my crops be uprooted.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

4 Does not he see my ways and number all my steps? 5 “If I have walked with falsehood and my foot has hastened to deceit; 6 (Let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity!) 7 if my step has turned aside from the way and my heart has gone after my eyes, and if any spot has stuck to my hands, 8 then let me sow, and another eat, and let what grows for me be rooted out.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

4 Does He not see my ways and number all my steps? 5 If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has rushed to deceit, 6 let God weigh me in accurate scales, and He will recognize my integrity. 7 If my step has turned from the way, my heart has followed my eyes, or impurity has stained my hands, 8 let someone else eat what I have sown, and let my crops be uprooted.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

4 Does he not see my ways and count my every step? 5 “If I have walked with falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit— 6 let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless—7 if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, 8 then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.

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

**4 “Does He not see my ways and number all my steps? 5 “If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened after deceit, 6 let Him weigh me with accurate scales, and let God know my integrity. 7 “If my step has turned from the way, or my heart followed my eyes, or if any spot has stuck to my hands, 8 let me sow and another eat, and let my crops be uprooted.**

Verses 5-8 refer to the sin of deceit and covetousness (The eyes are the means through which temptation comes).

Verse 4 is another rhetorical question. Cf. 14:16 and parallels (such as in Proverbs).

Verses 5-6 serve as a basic introduction to the rest of the chapter.

God knows the number of Job's steps; Job walks (walked/foot) with integrity; God judges righteously. (God knows Job's behavior and will judge him accurately).

Cf. Job 14:16 "For now You number my steps, You do not observe my sin.

The thought here draws upon the thought of 23:11: "My foot has held fast to his steps. I have kept his way and have not turned aside."

The idea of the steps or way of humans being open to the sight of God is common especially in the wisdom literature; cf. Pss 33:13; 69:5 (6); 94:11; 119:168; 139:1-4; Prov 5:21; Jer 23:24.

Note the essential differences between ancient pagan literature and sacred Scripture:

Job's request to be weighed in honest scales is reminiscent of the judgment scene in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. The forty-two statements of innocence before the forty-two gods of the tribunal are accompanied by the famous illustration in which Anubis brings the deceased before the scales of judgment and weighs the individual's heart against Maat (truth, justice), represented by her emblem feather, while Thoth records the results. If the declaration of the deceased is acceptable and the heart does not outweigh Maat, Horus ushers the deceased before Osiris, the god of the netherworld, and grants entry to the next life. If the deceased fails, the devouring gobbler waits hungrily nearby. [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 325]

Note that the Egyptian Book of the Dead includes some similar sins, but also those that are outside the scope of biblical truth.

Also see the two charts that follows this section below:

Verse 5 launches the catalog itself. Commentators dispute how many items the list includes, but the number's significance is minimal. If we base the list's structure on the protases, we can identify eleven paragraphs from 31:5-34:19 and a twelfth in 31:38-40. Each paragraph begins with "if" ('im), the typical Hebrew introduction to a self-curse. In such a curse, the protasis of the conditional statement usually appears alone, with an implied apodosis of judgment, such as "may God strike me dead."<sup>20</sup> Yet four of the twelve paragraphs of Job's oath feature an explicit apodosis (vv. 8, 10, 22, 40; and a further quasi-apodosis in v. 28). These apodoses are extreme and accordingly should be understood hyperbolically. Their excessive force demonstrates Job's confidence in his innocence. [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 323]

See verses 9-12 which clearly refer to sinful lust and the act of adultery. However, it may be better to see the sin of lust here and adultery in verses 9-12.

Verse 6, cf. Job's contention in 29:14, cf. 27:5. The rider on the black horse in Rev 6:5 had a "pair of scales," obviously a symbol of judgment.

HCSB = 7 If my step has turned from the way, my heart has followed my eyes, or impurity has stained my hands,

“Feet, heart, hands.” Cf. 22:30 and Psalm 24:4.

Metaphor of walking, with the associated terms of the way and of feet, for ethical behavior is of course common in wisdom texts; see on 23:11, and cf. Ps 119:59, 101; Prov 1:15–16; 4:26; 6:18.

Job’s “produce” (צִאֲצָאִים) is more likely to be his crops (as in Isa 34:1; 42:5) than his offspring or descendants (as elsewhere in Job, at 5:25; 21:8; 27:14). It would be strange for Job to wish that his children should be “rooted out” when in fact they are already dead. To be “uprooted” (שָׁרַף) is of course most naturally applied to crops, but it is used of humans in Ps 52:5 (7) and perhaps also at Job 31:12. [David J. A. Clines, 1017]

Eyes, cf. Prov. 27:20; 1 John 2:16.

Proverbs 27:20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

The curse of verse 18, cf. Zophar in 20:18:

20:18 [the wicked] “He returns what he has attained And cannot swallow it; As to the riches of his trading, He cannot even enjoy them.

Cf. Micah 6:15.

**\*VERSES 31:9-12\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway, 10 may my wife grind for another, and let others kneel down over her. 11 “For that would be a lustful crime; moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges. 12 “For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon, and would uproot all my increase.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

9 “If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, and I have lain in wait at my neighbor’s door, 10 then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down on her. 11 For that would be a heinous crime; that would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges; 12 for that would be a fire that consumes as far as Abaddon, and it would burn to the root all my increase.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

9 If my heart has been seduced by my neighbor’s wife or I have lurked at his door, 10 let my own wife grind grain for another man, and let other men sleep with her. 11 For that would be a disgrace; it would be a crime deserving punishment. 12 For it is a fire that consumes down to Abaddon; it would destroy my entire harvest.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door, 10 then may my wife grind another man’s grain, and may other men sleep with her. 11 For that would have been wicked, a sin to be judged. 12 It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.

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

**9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway, 10 may my wife grind for another, and let others kneel down over her. 11 “For that would be a lustful crime; moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges. 12 “For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon, and would uproot all my increase.**

The potential offense here concerns sexual purity. Being enticed by a woman entails falling prey to a second party’s active advances.<sup>22</sup> Lurking at a neighbor’s doorway exhibits a more active pursuit—solicitation of an adulterous liaison with the neighbor’s wife. These two examples demonstrate the oath’s application to a wide range of sexual misconduct and indicate that illicit sexual relationships, rather than merely any illicit sexual acts, are its target. The projected punishment is loss of legitimate sexual relationship. Another man would take Job’s wife, and Job would become the injured party instead of the neighbor. The image of Job’s wife “grinding another man’s grain” is a

sexual euphemism: She will process what another man produces (i.e., children). [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 326]

Woman here refers to a married woman, in contrast to the unmarried girl in verse 1. [UBS Handbook, 566]

And I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door: the thought here is of the male adulterer who watches for the opportunity to sin with his neighbor's wife. Lain in wait is the same expression used in Proverbs 7:12, where, however, it is the woman waiting for the man. This is a military expression and is used in reference to setting up an ambush; that is, hiding to take someone by surprise. In 24:15 "the eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight." [UBS Handbook, 566]

Proverbs 5:8 Keep your way far from her And do not go near the door of her house,

Then let my wife grind for another: in Exodus 11:5; Isaiah 47:2, grinding is the work of the slave. According to Gordis the thought expressed here through the use of grind is sexual. This is a rabbinical interpretation followed by the Targums and the Vulgate. The following line makes this clear. If grind is not to be taken as having sexual relations, the sense is that his wife should become the servant and concubine of another man, and so sexual relations are implied. On one level grind is to be understood as being humiliated or placed in the relation of servant to another man. On another level the thought is that of being used sexually. [UBS Handbook, 566]

31:10 "Grind" may be merely a euphemism (like "lie with" in English) or have a double meaning—the literal work of a slave<sup>71</sup> and the act of intercourse.<sup>72</sup> "Sleep with" is the dynamic equivalent translation of a verb meaning "bend over/bow down over," which, though still a euphemism, draws a clearer picture of the violation of Job's wife. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 301]

Proverbs 6:26–29 26 For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life. 27 Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned? 28 Or can a man walk on hot coals And his feet not be scorched? 29 So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.

The punishment which Job calls down on himself really falls on his wife. However, according to Leviticus 20:10, both the adulterer and the adulteress were to be killed.

And it would burn to the root all my increase: burn to the root translates the Hebrew verb "uproot." However, rooting out something is not what fire does, and so many scholars agree to change one letter to get "burn" . . . [UBS Handbook, 568]

Commentators have long recognized the offensiveness of Job's concept of a just punishment. "It does not satisfy our ethical sense that for Job's offence his wife who had no share in it, but was rather the sufferer by it, should bear the greatest part of the punishment" (Duhm, cited by Driver-Gray). And Good comments that "For a speech full of high-flown ethical principles, this one falls with a crash to earth." Hartley, on the other hand, simply observes that it is "strange to a modern audience." Not a few commentators offer some "explanation" by way perhaps of excuse; Duhm, for example, thought it was because a wife counted as a man's property, and Gordis found it "entirely comprehensible in terms of the ancient doctrine of corporate responsibility and family," while Hartley remarks that "his disgrace is as great as hers for letting this grave injustice happen to her." [David J. A. Clines, 1018]

Some are offended that Job's curse would unjustly victimize his wife rather than him. But this criticism misses the whole point. Job is not wishing any evil on his wife; he is asserting his innocence in this area in the strongest possible terms. His wife is completely safe because he has never met the condition. [Talbert, 156]

12 There is another dimension to the punishment Job envisages. It is not just a matter for the society to handle; the sin brings its own retribution along with it, a kind of cosmic disorder. It is itself a "fire so fierce that it would not burn itself out till it had burnt down to Sheol" (Driver-Gray), a fire that would destroy all the man's possessions. The act of adultery, Job means to say, is not a self-contained or containable incident, but the initiation of a process of annihilation; there is a "destructive evil inherent in the act" (Habel). Fohrer, comparing other references to adultery as a fire (Prov 6:27–29; cf. Eccles 9:8; 23:16), urges that the fire here is not the punishment but the act itself. The thought is, however, clearly not that of the fire of passion but of the consequences of it, as the second colon shows.

On Abaddon as a name for Sheol, see on 26:6. For the belief that sexual misconduct leads to death, cf. Prov 2:18; 5:5; 7:27; 9:18. In Eccles 6:2–4; 9:3–9; 19:2 and 1QH 3.31–32 there are other harmful consequences. [David J. A. Clines, 1019]

**\*VERSES 31:13-15\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

13 “If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves when they filed a complaint against me, 14 what then could I do when God arises? And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? 15 “Did not He who made me in the womb make him, and the same one fashion us in the womb?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

13 “If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me, 14 what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? 15 Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

13 If I have dismissed the case of my male or female servants when they made a complaint against me, 14 what could I do when God stands up to judge? How should I answer Him when He calls me to account? 15 Did not the One who made me in the womb also make them? Did not the same God form us both in the womb?

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

13 “If I have denied justice to any of my servants, whether male or female, when they had a grievance against me, 14 what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? 15 Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?”

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

**13 “If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves when they filed a complaint against me, 14 what then could I do when God arises? And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? 15 “Did not He who made me in the womb make him, and the same one fashion us in the womb?”**

Job’s protestations imply that he took every available opportunity to enact compassion and justice, as anyone who is able should, and therefore he considered himself above reproach. [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 326]

ESV and other translations have “servant” or “man/maid-servant” which fits the context better in light of the negative connotations of slavery in American history. ESV — 13 “If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me.” Note that these servants had a right of complaint, not true of American slaves.

Verse 13 may also be expressed “Whenever a man or woman who worked for me complained, I always listened to their case” [UBS Handbook, 570]

Note Phm, esp. v. 21.

Job spoke in 10:8–12 of God’s wondrous act of creating him in the womb. Here he acknowledges that the same is true for the slave. By saying this Job gives the reason why he respected the rights of his servants. [UBS Handbook, 571]

Proverbs 22:2 The rich and the poor have a common bond, The LORD is the maker of them all.

**\*VERSES 31:16-23\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

16 “If I have kept the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 or have eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not shared it 18 (but from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, and from infancy I guided her), 19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or that the needy had no covering, 20 if his loins have not thanked me, and if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep, 21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, because I saw I had support in the gate, 22 let my shoulder fall from the socket, and my arm be broken off at the elbow. 23 “For calamity from God is a terror to me, and because of His majesty I can do nothing.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

16 “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it 18 (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother’s womb I guided the widow), 19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, 20 if his body has not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, 21 if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, 22 then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket. 23 For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

16 If I have refused the wishes of the poor or let the widow’s eyes go blind, 17 if I have eaten my few crumbs alone without letting the fatherless eat any of it— 18 for from my youth, I raised him as his father, and since the day I was born I guided the widow— 19 if I have seen anyone dying for lack of clothing or a needy person without a cloak, 20 if he did not bless me while warming himself with the fleece from my sheep, 21 if I ever cast my vote against a fatherless child when I saw that I had support in the city gate, 22 then let my shoulder blade fall from my back, and my arm be pulled from its socket. 23 For disaster from God terrifies me, and because of His majesty I could not do these things.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

16 “If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, 17 if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless— 18 but from my youth I reared them as a father would, and from my birth I guided the widow— 19 if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or the needy without garments, 20 and their hearts did not bless me for warming them with the fleece from my sheep, 21 if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, 22 then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint. 23 For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.

## CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**16 “If I have kept the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 or have eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not shared it 18 (but from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, and from infancy I guided her), 19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or that the needy had no covering, 20 if his loins have not thanked me, and if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep, 21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, because I saw I had support in the gate, 22 let my shoulder fall from the socket, and my arm be broken off at the elbow. 23 “For calamity from God is a terror to me, and because of His majesty I can do nothing.**

Verses 16 and 17 (and also verses 19, 20, and 21) are translated in RSV as a string of “if” clauses, which are followed by the consequence of punishment in verse 22. Verse 23 then provides the reason why Job avoided doing the wrong things he mentioned. In these verses Job speaks of the poor, widows, and orphans—people who were dependent upon Job’s goodness. These denials are a reply to Eliphaz, who accused Job of refusing to feed the hungry. [UBS Handbook, 571–572]

Eliphaz accused Job of this very sin in 22:7–9. Job already claimed he was generous to the needy (29:12–16), but here he reinforces that claim by this negative confession and oath.

A thirteenth century Jewish sage said, “Poverty was created to give the rich an opportunity for charity.” [cited by Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 303. See his footnote for the source]

Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail . . . The expression is used in 11:20, where it means “to cause despair.” (See 11:20 for comments.) Psalm 69:3 refers to the eyes growing dim through crying. TEV “never have I let widows live in despair” gives the right thought here. The line may also be expressed “I have never caused widows to be without hope,” or stated positively, “I always gave widows reason to hope.” [UBS Handbook, 572]

The ramifications of this idiomatic expression reach beyond anatomical casualty: both arm and hand are metaphors for power. If Job had possessed the power to help and failed to do so, his power would be revoked. [NIV Application Commentary: *Job*, 326]

Job is claiming that he never used his power to oppress people or his influence to deprive them of justice. . . . Because I saw help in the gate: line b gives the imagined reason why Job could have done harm to an orphan, something which he says he did not do. Help in the gate refers to having the support and backing of the other officials in the town. If Job had wanted to mistreat anyone, he could have counted on those men who sat in the town council to defend him. [UBS Handbook, 574–575]

Verse 18 may be hyperbole or a reference to Job’s household growing up.

31:21 No one knows exactly what gesture the verse refers to, but the judges might have voted with upraised hands, or it might have been a way to signal bystanders to side against the defendant. [Robert L. Alden, 304]

The loins ,(חלציים)which are in modern English, more narrowly, that part of the lower back between the ribs and the pelvis, in Hebrew include the waist and the genitals. Sometimes in the Hebrew Bible they are the place of procreative power (as in Gen 35:11; 1 Kgs 8:19 || 2 Chr 6:9), but here they are obviously the part of the body that is especially warmed by having a sheepskin tied about the waist. [David J. A. Clines, 1022–1023]

It is not entirely clear what the meaning of the gesture of “shaking” (נָנַח)the hand against someone might be, but it is obviously not friendly (as also in Isa 10:32; 11:15; 13:2; 19:16; Zech 2:9 [13]; 1QM 17:9; Ecclus 36:3; 47:4). Andersen thinks of a fraudulent business deal, Fedrizzi of the gesture of the presiding judge prior to passing sentence, and Pope of a custom of “parties to a dispute having an escort to shout down, or, if necessary, beat down the opposition” (so too Hartley), but none of them cites any parallel evidence. [David J. A. Clines, 1023]

“Breaking of the arm” metaphor is also used also in 38:15 (cf. also Jer 48:25; Ezek 30:21, 22, 24; Pss 10:15; 37:17).

**\*VERSES 31:24-28\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

24 “If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, 25 if I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much; 26 If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, 27 and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, 28 that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

24 “If I have made gold my trust or called fine gold my confidence, 25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth was abundant or because my hand had found much, 26 if I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon moving in splendor, 27 and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand, 28 this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

24 If I placed my confidence in gold or called fine gold my trust, 25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth is great or because my own hand has acquired so much, 26 if I have gazed at the sun when it was shining or at the moon moving in splendor, 27 so that my heart was secretly enticed and I threw them a kiss, 28 this would also be a crime deserving punishment, for I would have denied God above.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

24 “If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, ‘You are my security,’ 25 if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, 26 if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, 27 so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, 28 then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

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

**24 “If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, 25 if I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much; 26 If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, 27 and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, 28 that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above.**

Job is here denying the charges made against him by Eliphaz in 22:24 and following:

Here in this uncomplicated statement and by means of a conditional sentence, Job professed that he did not put his trust in gold. In Eliphaz’s little evangelistic sermon he

promised Job that if he abandoned his gold, God would become his “gold” (22:24–25). Job maintained that it was never otherwise (Prov 18:11). [Robert L. Alden, Job, 305–306]

Psalm 62:10b . . . If riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.

God is both the object of Job’s trust (14-25) and his worship (26-28). Job’s trust was not in wealth or possessions (it was in God) — and his worship was not in astral bodies, but in God. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:19.

The second potential locus of trust is the gods, particularly the astral deities (sun and moon). The offense to which Job refers involves perception followed by a response of worship (v. 27b). In verse 29, the verb “enticed” is the same as in 31:9, although the verbal stem is different (Qal, four other occurrences: Deut. 11:16; Job 5:2; Prov. 20:19; Hos. 7:11). Contextual usage of this stem suggests a stative aspect,<sup>23</sup> “to be gullible or mindless; easily led astray.” While some English translations render the act of worship as a hand offering a kiss of homage (NIV), the Hebrew is much more laconic and somewhat puzzling: “my hand kissed my mouth.” The verb “kiss” (nšq in Qal plus prep. l-) appears in a worship context only one other time (1 Kings 19:13, kissing Baal). [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 327]

For the prohibition of worship of sun and moon, see Deut 4:19; 17:2–7; cf. 2 Kgs 21:3, 5; 23:5; Jer 7:18; 8:1–2; 44:17–18; Zeph 1:5; Ezek 8:16.

According to Tacitus, Histories 3.24, it was a Syrian custom to salute the rising sun. Herodian (4.15.1) says the same for the Parthians, but he may be simply imitating Tacitus. Procopius says the same of the Persians (The Persian War 1.3.20). The Nabataeans, according to Strabo, honored the sun, with altars in each house and daily libations. The Greeks, according to Lucian (The Dance 17), would kiss their hands to the sun as it rose, while the Indians, he says, would welcome it with dancing. The Essenes, according to Josephus’s report (Jewish War 2.128 [2.8.5]), offer at dawn prayers to the sun “as if beseeching it to rise.” [David J. A. Clines, 1026]

Romans 1:25 and contemporary earth worship.

**\*VERSES 31:29-30\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

29 “Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? 30 “No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

29 “If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him 30 (I have not let my mouth sin by asking for his life with a curse),

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

29 Have I rejoiced over my enemy’s distress, or become excited when trouble came his way? 30 I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life with a curse.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

29 “If I have rejoiced at my enemy’s misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him—  
30 I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against their life—

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

Several unusual features of this section [29-34] make it difficult to follow. First, it mixes declarative statements with the succession of conditions. There is also no “then” clause until v. 40, the condition-consequence structure being interrupted by the parenthetical requests in vv. 35–37 (note the absence of punctuation ending v. 34). Furthermore, the subject of the negative confession moves from an ill spirit of retaliation, to stinginess toward domestic help and travelers, to concealing sin. [Robert L. Alden, 307]

**29 “Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? 30 “No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse.**

31:29–32, 38–40. The overarching theme of this paragraph may be termed “grace to outsiders”—outsiders being identified as those who are not members in good standing in the community. The text references various categories of people: enemies (vv. 29–30), strangers (vv. 31–32), and landowners (vv. 38–39). The first two groups are defined clearly, and their outsider status is readily visible. The third category, however, is more problematic. The NIV translates “tenants,” but the Hebrew word (ba’al) usually signifies owner or master. If the two lines of verse 39 are parallel, and there is every reason to believe they are, the verse describes Job as devouring landowners’ property, not just its yield, without payment. Such confiscation would naturally bring grief, expressed here by a deep sigh, to the owners. [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 328]

Schadenfreude . . . Cf. Eliphaz's contention that the righteous laugh when they see the downfall of the wicked (22:19–20).

“If the writer of Job knew such prayers as ‘In Thy lovingkindness destroy all them that afflict my soul’ (Ps 143:12), ‘Send out Thy arrows and destroy them’ (144:6) . . . he kept his lips closed while others sang them. . . . But his heart would have burned within him if he could have listened to Matt 5:43–48” (Strahan). [David J. A. Clines, 1028]

Proverbs 24:17–18 17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; 18 Or the LORD will see it and be displeased, And turn His anger away from him.

Romans 12:14 — bless not curse . . .

**\*VERSES 31:31-32\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

31 “Have the men of my tent not said, ‘Who can find one who has not been satisfied with his meat?’ 32 “The alien has not lodged outside, for I have opened my doors to the traveler.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

31 if the men of my tent have not said, ‘Who is there that has not been filled with his meat?’ 32 (the sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler),

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

31 Haven’t the members of my household said, “Who is there who has not had enough to eat at Job’s table?” 32 No stranger had to spend the night on the street, for I opened my door to the traveler.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

31 if those of my household have never said, ‘Who has not been filled with Job’s meat?’— 32 but no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler—

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

**31 “Have the men of my tent not said, ‘Who can find one who has not been satisfied with his meat?’ 32 “The alien has not lodged outside, for I have opened my doors to the traveler.**

At Job’s table, of course, there could have been lamb or beef on the menu every day of the week (he has seven thousand sheep and one thousand oxen in 1:3; and cf. Solomon’s menu in 1 Kgs 4:23 [5:3]). We are to imagine Job entertaining guests on the pattern of Abraham in Gen 18:2–8. [David J. A. Clines, 1029]

ANE and hospitality . . . like the Levite of Judg 19:13–15, who plans on settling down for the night in the town square because no one has invited him home (cf. Gen 19:2; Luke 24:29).

In 22:7 Eliphaz had accused Job of denying “water to the weary” and withholding “food from the hungry.”

**\*VERSES 31:33-34\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

33 “Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, 34 because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, and kept silent and did not go out of doors?”

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

33 if I have concealed my transgressions as others do by hiding my iniquity in my heart, 34 because I stood in great fear of the multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence, and did not go out of doors—

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

33 Have I covered my transgressions as others do by hiding my guilt in my heart, 34 because I greatly feared the crowds, and the contempt of the clans terrified me, so I grew silent and would not go outside?

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

33 if I have concealed my sin as people do, by hiding my guilt in my heart 34 because I so feared the crowd and so dreaded the contempt of the clans that I kept silent and would not go outside—

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

**33 “Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, 34 because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, and kept silent and did not go out of doors?”**

If this verse is treated as a question, as many translations prefer, we may translate, for example, “Have I ever been so afraid of people’s gossip or terrified by their ridicule that it caused me to stay at home and keep silent?” [UBS Handbook, 584]

“Like Adam” - see other translations that do not render this literally.

ESV - 33 if I have concealed my transgressions as others do by hiding my iniquity in my heart,

In not hiding sin he distinguishes himself from Adam.  $\text{כְּאָדָם}$  is most naturally taken as “like Adam” (so KJV, NJPS, DCH, 1:129b, Delitzsch, Gibson, Terrien, Pope, Gordis, Sicre Díaz, Habel) or “as Adam did” (NIVmg.); it is beside the point that Adam hid his sin from God and not from other humans (as Driver-Gray note). Dhorme thinks that “like Adam” is “too Jewish in tone” (whatever that might be), and many others also think that we should translate “as men do” (NEB, NIV), “as others do” (NRSV, REB), “after the manner of men” (RVmg.), “like the common herd” (Dhorme), which is to say “out of

human weakness” (NAB). But, as Driver-Gray point out, such a sense “would cast a quite uncalled for reflection on the rest of mankind.” [David J. A. Clines, 1030]

No skeletons in Job’s closet.

**\*VERSES 31:35-37\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

35 “Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 “I would declare to Him the number of my steps; like a prince I would approach Him.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

35 Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my Adversary! 36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown; 37 I would give him an account of all my steps; like a prince I would approach him.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

35 If only I had someone to hear my case! Here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me. Let my Opponent compose His indictment. 36 I would surely carry it on my shoulder and wear it like a crown. 37 I would give Him an account of all my steps; I would approach Him like a prince.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

35 (“Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing. 36 Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown. 37 I would give him an account of my every step; I would present it to him as to a ruler.)—

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

**35 “Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 “I would declare to Him the number of my steps; like a prince I would approach Him.**

This is Job’s “signature” to his oath.

In the absence of an advocate or judge, he sets his signature to the dossier of oaths. The text includes no word for this dossier (NIV adds “defense” for clarification). His “signature” is an X mark—the Hebrew word is *taw*, the final letter of the alphabet, which in the earliest forms of the script took the shape of an X. [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 329]

His “signature” may not be exactly his name, as it is for us, but his “sign.” The word is *taw* , (טו) the name of the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in the form of an X in the old Hebrew (paleo-Hebrew) script. Presumably illiterate people marked documents with their X. Whether the character Job is represented as illiterate or not is of little account; perhaps he simply refers to his signature poetically as a sign. For the sign of *taw* marking the foreheads of those who are to be spared punishment, see Ezek 9:4, 6 (and cf. Rev. 7:3; 13:16). [David J. A. Clines, 1034]

Note the Greek Chi (X) standing for Christ.

Surely I would carry it on my shoulder: in Isaiah 22:22 the key of the house of David is placed by God on the shoulder of his servant Eliakim. Carrying the indictment on the shoulder made it possible for everyone to see it. [UBS Handbook, 586]

In 14:16 and 31:4 Job accepts that God counts his steps as expressing the totality of Job’s actions.

. . . Job challenges God as his legal opponent (as he is in 9:15–16; 10:2; 13:3, 18–22; 23:4–7) to “answer” (ענה) him as his respondent: he requires God to do that by delivering to him a document, the bill of charges against him, which might correspond to Job’s own affidavit of innocence. . . . Job calls the document he demands from God a ספר, generally translated, anachronistically, as “book,” but also the term for a legal document at Deut 24:1, 3; Isa 50:1 (a deed of divorce) or at Jer 32:11–12, 14, 16 (a deed of purchase); here it is an indictment. [David J. A. Clines, 1034]

29:14 “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban.”

Alden seems to differ in that it is Job’s signed affidavit that he would publicly display:

31:36 Job indicated that he would proudly and publicly display his signed affidavit as a “crown”<sup>94</sup> and as a sash, stole, or badge of office (cf. Isa 9:6 [5]; 22:22).<sup>95</sup> Rather than hiding his sin and dreading the crowds (vv. 33–34), he gladly would proclaim his innocence. [Robert L. Alden, 309]

Who is the “accuser?” Could be one of Job’s friends. Could be that Job means God. Cf. different translations and note the ESV and the HCSB which assumes it to be God.

As for the rather insolent language:

That Job does step over the line at some point(s) is beyond dispute; God Himself rebukes Job for doing so (38:2ff.; 40:2,8). [Talbert, 158]

**\*VERSES 31:38-40\***

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:**

38 “If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together; 39 if I have eaten its fruit without money, or have caused its owners to lose their lives, 40 let briars grow instead of wheat, and stinkweed instead of barley.” The words of Job are ended.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:**

38 “If my land has cried out against me and its furrows have wept together, 39 if I have eaten its yield without payment and made its owners breathe their last, 40 let thorns grow instead of wheat, and foul weeds instead of barley.” The words of Job are ended.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:**

38 If my land cries out against me and its furrows join in weeping, 39 if I have consumed its produce without payment or shown contempt for its tenants, 40 then let thorns grow instead of wheat and stinkweed instead of barley. The words of Job are concluded.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:**

38 “if my land cries out against me and all its furrows are wet with tears, 39 if I have devoured its yield without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants, 40 then let briars come up instead of wheat and stinkweed instead of barley.” The words of Job are ended.

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

**38 “If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together; 39 if I have eaten its fruit without money, or have caused its owners to lose their lives, 40 let briars grow instead of wheat, and stinkweed instead of barley.” The words of Job are ended.**

Tenant farmers.

Let thorns grow instead of wheat: in Genesis 3:18 God told Adam that the ground is cursed and that thorns and thistles would come from it; however, the words are different from the ones used here. The word translated thorns is rendered in 2 Kings 14:9 as “thorn bush” (TEV) and in Isaiah 34:13 “thistles.” Wheat and barley were the most prized grain crops and occur together in Deuteronomy 8:8 and Joel 1:11.

And foul weeds instead of barley: the word translated foul weeds occurs only here in the Old Testament, but it is derived from the verb meaning “to have a bad odor.” There is little point in trying to be too specific in the translation of this term, unless there is a weed that commonly grows in uncultivated soil and has a bad odor. In languages in which wheat and barley are unknown, translators should follow the procedure suggested in 28:18.

What was the sin against the land that Job disavows? Not allowing it to have Sabbath rest (Exod 23:10–11; Lev 25:2–7), an anachronism?

Alternatively, if we connect this verse more closely with the following, the land is personified as crying out against Job, whether as a person who has removed its rightful owners or as one who has withheld wages from those who work on it, whether with or without the support of the law. Job is aware that the law protects the strong rather than the weak, and that the weak can be injured lawfully. So he does not necessarily imagine himself violently and illegally throwing peasants off their land, still less shedding the blood of former owners (as Peake), acts for which he would no doubt have incurred public opprobrium if nothing worse, but as forcing peasants into debt and so eventually off their land. The practice of *latifundium*, buying up the land of others to increase one's own holdings, is referred to in Isa 5:8; Mic 2:2 . . . [David J. A. Clines, 1031]

39 There is more than one way of taking this verse: if v 38 concerned injustice done to the land itself, we have in v 39 a further kind of wrong Job forswears, a wrong against the rightful owners of the land or against those who earn their living from working on it. But if v 38 was about them anyway, what we have in v 39 is the reason why the ground might have cried out for justice against him (the “if” here would then be subordinate to the “if” of v 38): that is to say, if he had taken its produce without paying its rightful owners or producers for it, or if he had wronged them in some other way. [David J. A. Clines, 1032]

The words of Job are ended: these words are in prose form. The reference is to all that Job has said in chapters 29–31. Job will speak again briefly in chapters 40 and 42. We may translate “Job has finished speaking” or “Job will not make any more speeches.” [UBS Handbook, 588]

It has been a long uphill path from the opening words of his first speech, “Perish the day I was born!” (3:3), but he stands triumphant now, as if he has been awaking from death. Nothing has changed, truth to tell; his bereavements are as real as they ever have been, his physical sufferings still torment him, and to this moment he is shorn of his honor and stigmatized by all who know him as the chiefest of sinners. Yet in himself he is still the prince, and that even before God. [David J. A. Clines, 1036]