

Job 4

Job 4:1–21

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Introduction: When *Job's friends came to mourn with him,...*[he discovered] that they were just a mirage on the desert. When he saw them coming, he thought they were an oasis but they were only a mirage, and he finally calls them "miserable comforters." We are going to see why.¹ Both Job 4 and 5 should have been combined into one chapter; they are the first comments of Eliphaz. Eliphaz is polite and solicitous, but his remarks boil down to *the innocent do not suffer as Job is suffering*. Also, in this time of very limited revelation, Eliphaz submits to Job a great vision and experience and then imparts the *great wisdom* which he received from this vision. Eliphaz is *the most mild of Job's accusers; yet, though his accusations are conducted with great art, and with a studious regard to urbanity of manner, they are terribly severe...The speech of Eliphaz consists mainly of the statement of his own observations, that the righteous are prospered, and the wicked punished, in this world; and in solemn advice to Job to return to God, and commit his cause to him. There is not a direct charge of hypocrisy, but it is implied throughout the argument, and the discussion which it brings on leads to this direct charge in some of the subsequent speeches.*²

Eliphaz is likely the oldest of Job's three friends and, because of this experience that he had and because of his age, McGee calls him the voice of experience. It is possible that he is also closest to Job of the three. We do not know their exact relationship. Because of the length of lives during the time of Job, it is possible that Eliphaz is even fifty years older than Job and was his mentor or, perhaps, Job's surrogate father.

McGee: *The dialogue that takes place is a real contest...Today people go to a football game or a baseball, basket ball or hockey game—something athletic where the physical is demonstrated. In those days people gathered for intellectual contests. I think that by the time these men were getting under way in this dialogue a great crowd had gathered around, listening to what was taking place. We want to think that those people were no civilized, yet they put the emphasis on the intellectual. And we consider ourselves to be such civilized people who have advanced so far, but we put the emphasis on the physical. We are not as superior to these ancient people as we would like to think.*³

McGee: *Eliphaz is the spiritualist. He has had a dream and a vision. He feels that he has had a remarkable experience and should be heard. Many of the testimonies we hear in our day have little value because they rest truth on experience. First of all we should have truth, which is the Word of God; then experience should come out of that. Many experiences do not coincide with God's Word. I have heard testimonies given by so-called Christians who have had a "great experience" that is no more scriptural than the telephone directory.*⁴

¹ Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 34.

² Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 141.

³ Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 41.

⁴ J. Vernon McGee; Job; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1977; p. 89.

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Job Has Counseled Others in Their Difficulties; Now Trouble Has Come to Him

Literally:

Smoother English rendering:

**Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite;
and he said:**

Job 4:1

**Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered
and said:**

Esau, the brother of Jacob, had a son Eliphaz, who would have lived with Esau in Edom (Gen. 36:15 I Chron. 1:35). Eliphaz had a son named Teman (Gen. 36:15 I Chron. 1:36) and Teman refers either to an area of Edom or a family in Edom (Jer. 49:20 Ezek. 25:13). The time would be just right for Job and Eliphaz. The long life thing was coming to an end since the flood (Gen. 11:10–26). Since Job lived to the age of 170, we cannot place him too far away from the flood. We can assume (1) he may have lived longer than the average person, given what God allowed him to go through; and, (2) the life spans of man did not necessarily drop at the same rate throughout the Mideast. For these reasons, I would think that the line of Esau given in both I Chron. 1 and in Gen. 36 mark the latest time frame for this story to have taken place. Now, certainly, it is possible for Eliphaz to have named his son after the land where they lived, but I suspect that it was the other way around.

As you will recall, Eliphaz is the leader of the three, probably the eldest; and this trip to see Job was likely his idea. He, like the other two, were unprepared for seeing Job as he was. He has pondered this situation for seven days and has listened to what Job has to say. Now he gives his response:

**“If one attempts a word toward you,
will you be impatient?
And to restrain in words,
who is able?”**

Job 4:2

**“If one attempts to speak to you,
will you listen?
In any case, I find myself unable to refrain
from speaking these words.”**

Or, in even more of a loose rendering, we would have, “Now you have been going on and on; now let me say a few things, alright?” McGee: *He begins in a diplomatic sort of way, but one gets the feeling he has his tongue in his cheek. This is sort of false politeness. He says to Job, “Do you mind if I say something?” Then he adds, “Regardless of whether or not you mind my saying something, I’m going to say it.” And he does.*⁵

This verse begins with an interrogative particle. Then the first verb is the Piel perfect of nâçâh (נָצַח) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], which means *to test, to try, to attempt, to try to do a thing*. Strong’s #5254 BDB #650.

The second line has the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of lâ’âh (לָאָה) [pronounced *law-AW*], which means *to be weary, to be impatient*; when used between man and God, it means *to exhaust the patience of God*. Strong’s #3811 BDB #521. I have extended the application of the interrogative from the first line to this line as well.

Eliphaz adds the Qal infinitive construct of the verb *restrain*, the bêtth preposition and the plural of *words*; a different interrogative (which means *who*) and the 3rd person, masculine singular of *able*. Literally this is: **“And to restrain in words, who is able?”** Eliphaz is polite and solicitous. He respects Job, but know what he is about to say will implicate Job in sin—therefore, he displays a kind regard for Job’s feelings, verbally approaching Job with caution.

Eliphaz can barely contain himself. After seven days of sitting and saying nothing, then listening to Job, Eliphaz is about to burst, as are the others. Elihu will say: **“I too will answer my share; I also will tell my opinion. For I am full of words; the spirit within me constrains me. Behold, my belly is like unvented wine—like new wineskins it is about to bust. Let me speak that I may get relief. Let me open my lips and answer.”** (Job 32:18–20).

⁵ Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 42.

**“Behold, you have instructed many
and you have strengthened weak hands.**

Job 4:3

**“Look, you have instructed many
and you have given strength to those who
are weak.**

Eliphaz acknowledges that Job has communicated wisdom to his family, friends and to any who would listen. People, in those times, had difficulties, as they do now and Job had helped to strengthen those people. It was through Job’s communication of divine wisdom that others were strengthened. As Isaiah wrote: **Encourage the exhausted and strengthen the feeble** (Isa. 35:3). Job later confirms that this was true: **“I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy and I investigate the case which I did not know...To me, they listened and waited; and they kept silent for my counsel...I chose a way for them and sat as chief; and I dwelt as a king among the troops, as one who comforted the mourners.”** (Job 29:15–16, 21, 25).

The hands are raised in war and in work. When one becomes tired and weary, they allow their hands to fall. This can refer just as well to spiritual things as well. Job apparently functioned at times as a counselor of sorts, encouraging others, discerning the reasons for their ills, and helping them to recover. *The hands are the instruments by which we accomplish anything, and when they are weak, it is an indication of helplessness.*⁶ In the New Testament, this analogy is made to encourage rebound (the naming of one’s sins to God in order to be restored to fellowship). **Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed** (Heb. 12:12–13).

Barnes makes the important point: *This is not designed to be irony, or to wound the feelings of Job. It is intended to recall to his mind the lessons which he had inculcated on others in times of calamity, and to show him how important it was now that he should reduce his own lessons to practice, and show their power in sustaining himself.*⁷

**“The stumbling one,
your words have made stand;
and bowing knees, you have made strong.**

Job 4:4

**“Your words have caused those stumbling
in the faith to stand;
and you have strengthened the weak.**

The verb *to bow* is found as an adjective in the Qal active participle to describe the dual of *knees*. In this context, they mean *tottering, feeble*. Strong’s #3766 BDB #502. *Tottering and feeble* can refer to a person out of fellowship, or to a person who has been blind-sided by life or by their own mistakes. Under the right circumstances, apart from being a busy body or sticking one’s nose where it does not belong, there is a ministry to others who are stumbling. This seems to fall into the lap of the pastor of any given church, but the gift of pastor-teacher is not automatically appended by the gift of counseling. Many pastors who counsel should not be pastors; and many pastors should not counsel—it is not their gift and the two do not go hand-in-hand. However, there is a definite need on the part of the weak for those who are spiritually immature who need some personal guidance. In this regard, although it makes me grimace to say this, there is a need for Christian counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists.

This is followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect of *’āmêtz* (אָמֵץ) [pronounced *aw-MATES*], and this word means *to be strong, stout, bold, alert*. Strong’s #553 BDB #54.

Already what Eliphaz has said has made me nervous, and I’m not Job. It sounds as though he is encouraging Job, as Job has done that to that to many others. However, this belongs with the expression, *he is such a nice person, but...* and on the other side of that *but* is what they really wanted to say.

⁶ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 143.

⁷ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 143.

**“For now it has come to you and so you are
impatient;
It strikes you and so you are overwhelmed.**

Job 4:5

**“For now evil has come to you and you have
become impatient;
It strikes you and you have become
overwhelmed.**

I have mentioned in the past that the book of Job appears to have a very limited vocabulary. Certain words and phrase show up again and again. We have a repeat of a pair of words from a previous verse: *kîy* *‘attâh* (כִּי אַתָּה) [pronounced *kee-ġaht-TAWH*]. The preposition *kîy* is generally rendered *for, because, when, that*. *‘Attâh* means *now*. Together, however, they mean *for in this case, for then*. (*Kîy* = Strong’s #3588 BDB #471). *‘Attâh* = Strong’s #6258 BDB #773. So far this combination has shown up at least twice in the book of Job, and it was translated in these ways:

Kîy ‘Attâh Chart		
Translator:	Job 3:13	Job 4:5
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Surely, at once...	But now...
NJB	Now...	And now...
NRSV	Now...	But now...
<i>The Amplified Bible</i> ; NAB, Owen’s translation	For then...	But now...
KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, Noyes, REV, <i>Young’s Literal Translation</i>	For now...	But now...

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The first verb is interesting because it is the 3rd feminine singular, Qal imperfect of the common verb *to come*. The last feminine singular is a long ways off. Back in Job’s soliloquy in Job 3:24, his *sighing* was in the feminine singular. However, that is too far back for Eliphaz to return to for the substantive. An obviously, a 3rd person feminine singular does not refer to God. One uses a pronoun instead of a substantive so that the noun does not get overused. It varies the pattern of speech. However, in the passage before us, Eliphaz is not referring back to a particular substantive. *It* is the literal way this should be rendered; however, I think that what Eliphaz had on his mind, but would not come right out and say it, is the feminine singular of the word for *evil, calamity*.

Barnes points out: *It is easy thing to give counsel to others, and to exhort them to be submissive in trial. It is easy to utter general maxims, and to suggest passages of Scripture on the subject of affliction, and even to impart consolation to others; but when trial comes to ourselves, we often fail to realize the power of those truths to console us. Ministers of the gospel are called officially to impart such consolations, and are enabled to do it. But when the trial comes on them, and when they ought by every solemn consideration to be able to show the power of those truths in their own case, it sometimes happens that they evince the same impatience and want of submission which they had rebuked in others; and that whatever truth and power there may have been in their instructions, they themselves little felt their force. It is often necessary that he who is appointed to comfort the afflicted, should be afflicted himself. Then he can ‘weep with those who weep;’ and hence it is that minsters of the gospel are called quite as much as any other class of men to pass through deep waters. Hence, too, the Lord Jesus became so pre-eminent in suffering, that he might be touched with our feelings of our infirmity, and be qualified to sympathize with us when we are tried...It is exceedingly important that when they whose office it is to comfort others are afflicted, they should exhibit an example of patience and submission. Then is the time to try their religion; and then they have an opportunity to convince others that the doctrines which they preach are adapted to the condition of weak and suffering man.*⁸ **Therefore, He [Jesus Christ] had to be made like His brothers in all things, that He might**

⁸ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 143.

become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who has been tempted in all things, as we, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 2:17–18 4:15–16).

At first, it sounds as though Eliphaz is not completely thinking things through here. Job has been known to strengthen and help those in need and he knows that there are no instant fixes to life's problems. Well, now Job needs some helping out and some strengthening and Job has allowed himself to become impatient and dismayed. This would be a silly position to take, as what Job is facing is far beyond what we can imagine. Job is not just suffering some temporary setback that a few nice words and a little time will cure. However, this is not what is in the back of the mind of Eliphaz.

Also, Job does not need counseling or advice—he hasn't done anything to deserve this. Here, he needs the sympathy of his friends. *"For the despairing man, there should be kindness from his friend; so that he does not forsake the reverence of the Almighty."* (Job 6:14). I need to state that carefully because so many people think that their friends and loved ones should back them up no matter what course or direction that they choose. When you choose to do something which is wrong, which is against the authority of God, you cannot expect a Christian to nod and agree and to support you with whatever decision you make. In fact, there are some decisions which would cause another Christian to separate from you (see the **Doctrine of Separation**, covered in Deut. 17:17). However, when sin is not involved (and we don't get to speculate, as do Job's friends, when it is not obvious), then we give our unconditional support and love.

"Look, you have instructed many and you have given strength to those who are weak. Your words have caused those stumbling in the faith to stand; and you have strengthened the weak. For now evil has come to you and you have become impatient; it strikes you and you have become overwhelmed." (Job 4:4–6). Let's allow McGee to summarize these verses: *He is saying to Job, "In the old days when you were in prosperity and in good health, you were a tower of strength to everybody else. You could advise them. You could speak to them and tell them what to do. You knew how to help those who were in trouble. But now something has happened to you, and you have folded up. You're just a paper doll; you're just a paper tiger. You were never real at all. The advice you gave to others—can't you follow it yourself?" I would say that is the problem that a great many of us have today. Isn't it interesting that we can always tell the other person what he should do when troubles come to him?*⁹

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Are the Innocent Destroyed? You Reap What You Sow

**"Is not your reverential fear your dogmatism
[or, blind side]?
Your hope and integrity of your ways?"**

Job 4:6

**"Is not your reverential fear your dogmatism
[or, blind side]?
And is not your hope the integrity of your
ways?"**

Before I cover an important word from this verse, what I would like you to examine is the translations of others:

Albert Barnes

Is not thy confidence and thy expectation [founded on] thy fear of God, And on the integrity of thy ways?

The Amplified Bible

Is not your (reverent) fear of God your confidence, and the integrity and uprightness of your ways your hope?

E. W. Bullinger

Is not thy fear thy confidence? And the integrity of thy ways, thy hope?

⁹ Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 42.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Is not thy reverence thy confidence? And is not thy hope the very integrity of thy ways?
The Latin Vulgate	Is not your fear founded on folly, and your hope and the evil of your way?
NKJV	Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?
NAB	Is not your piety a source of confidence, and your integrity of life your hope?
NEB	Is your religion no comfort to you? Does your blameless life give you no hope?
NIV	Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?
NRSV	Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?
Owen's Translation	Is not your fear your confidence (your stupidity); you hope and the integrity of your ways.
REB	Does your piety give you no assurance? Does your blameless life afford you no hope?
The Septuagint	Is not your fear <i>founded</i> in folly, your hope also, and the mischief of your way?
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	Is not thy reverence thy confidence? Thy hope—the perfection of thy ways?

You see, things seem reasonable until you get this odd parenthetical note in Owen's; (*your stupidity*). You should be wondering just what is going on? With this verse, we run across a rather difficult word. However, first let me point out that this verse begins with an interrogative and a negative, and they should be rendered *is not* or *should not*. Then we have the words *your fear* (or, *your reverence*), and you will not that at this point, several Bibles function more as a commentary rather than as a translation. You will note that *The Amplified Bible*, Noyes and the NRSV all insert the words *of God*; but these words are not in the Hebrew. This is strictly interpretative. The Latin Vulgate, although a great help to us in some passages, also was very interpretive at times. Eliphaz would not have made a statement to Job as strong as the Latin Vulgate indicates—that is just simply out of his character, particularly this early on in his discussions with Job. Barnes, likewise, quotes many other translators of this passage, gives the alternate views of its meaning, but settles upon the meaning found in most of our modern translations.

They key to unlocking what Eliphaz said is just one word; the feminine singular of the word *kiç^olâh* (כִּסְלָה) [pronounced *kiss^e-LAW*], a word which is found in two passages, Job 4:6 and Psalm 85:8*, generally translated *confidence* in the former and *folly* or *stupidity* in the latter. Strong's #3690 BDB #493. Fem. noun = Job 4:6. We have a masculine noun, translated *loin, flanks* in Lev. 3:4, 9, 10 4:9 7:4 Job 15:27 Psalm 38:7; *folly, stupidity* in Psalm 49:13 Eccl. 7:25; and *hope, confidence* in Job 8:14 31:24 Psalm 78:7 Prov. 3:26.* Strong's #3689 BDB #492. There is a related noun referring specifically to a person with these characteristics, and translated *fool, foolish one, stupid fellow, dullard* throughout (Psalm 49:10 Prov. 1:22, 32 3:35 8:5 Eccl. 2:14–16) with the occasional exception rendering of *Orion* (Job 9:9 38:31 Amos 5:8). Strong's #3684–3685 BDB #493. There is the related feminine noun, found once, rendered *stupidity* (Prov. 9:12*) and the verb meaning *to be stupid* (Jer. 10:8*). Strong's #3688 BDB #492. My feeling is that the *confidence* and *hope* alluded to here come from *stupidity* and should perhaps be rendered *dogmatism, dogmatic* (in a negative sense), *hard-headed, bull-headed, bull-headedness, pig-headedness, blind-side*. This is a person who is absolutely certain about something concerning which he is absolutely wrong; they have based their confidence and hope upon that which is false. They are absolutely certain of their position, which is based upon falsehoods and misconceptions. This is their *blind side*; some people can be very bright and articulate, but have a blind side concerning which they are incorrect (e.g., people who believe in evolution). You must understand that Eliphaz is not going to lambast his friend immediately; he will question him subtly; so therefore, he will use a word which we have not given the proper rendering to; a word which can very loosely be understood as *stupidity* or as *hope*; therefore, we go with the rendering *dogmatism* or *blind side*. What Eliphaz is suggesting is that the tremendous reverence of Job has also got him blind-sided. He doesn't exactly know what is going on because he is not objective about the situation. What is required is the careful observations of a neutral third party. Eliphaz does not come right out and call Job stupid. You have to understand that we are not dealing with some group of primitive cave men, but with men who are very intelligent business men. Eliphaz is subtle, but direct, in what he says. This word can be taken in two different ways, like the word *dogmatic*. Most people would call my former pastor, R.B. Thieme, *dogmatic*. They may be thinking *narrow-minded, opinionated and bull-headed*; Thieme would hear the same word in the same context, and think *authoritative, speaking God's Word accurately and with authority*. There is nothing wrong with speaking dogmatically about the truth. It is when one's thinking and dogmatism becomes one's blind-side that it has a

negative connotation. If one is dogmatic about that which is false, such as those who believe strongly in evolution, then that is one kind of dogmatism; and when one is dogmatic about the truth, that is another kind of dogmatism (the evolutionist would think that we have our ideas about dogmatism backwards at this point). What Eliphaz is suggesting is that Job has been blind-sided by his own strong faith. Not that his faith is wrong, but that Job just does not realize that he is wrong. Neither Job nor Eliphaz know about what has happened in heaven. They do not realize the full extent of their involvement in the angelic conflict (which is true of most Christians today); and since Eliphaz does not fully grasp what is going on, he begins questioning and commenting in a subtle way.

The last line is literally: *your hope and integrity of your ways*. One way of interpreting this is as a continuation of the previous sentence. I.e., "*Is not your reverential fear your dogmatism [or, blind-side], your hope and the integrity of your ways?*" I believe this is what Keil and Delitzsch meant when they spoke of the waw apodosis. And your hope, is not even this the integrity of your way? is the sense of the waw apodosis. However, Keil and Delitzsch do not support this view, claiming it to be *an error in a clause consisting only of substantives, and is not supported by examples* which have been given.¹⁰ E.W. Bullinger suggests that inversion is the key to this verse and that the words should be transposed to give the correct meaning: *Is not your fear your confidence? And your hope, the integrity of your ways?* The other way to interpret this second line is as a separate question from the first, carrying over the essential sentence structure of the first. In other words, "*Is not your reverential fear your dogmatism [or blind-side]; is not your hope the integrity of your ways?*"

Now let me give you the short McGee version interpretation of what Eliphaz is saying: "*Isn't your own advice good enough for you? I helped others; now it ought to help you.*"¹¹

Now you may wonder why we spend any amount of time of the vocabulary of Eliphaz at all. Certainly, even though this is the inspired Word of God, we are guaranteed of nothing more than this is the content of his message; therefore, why do we examine some individual words? It is by his use here that we can discern the meaning of these words elsewhere. The example given above makes it clear that that word did not mean *stupidity* as no friend would have said something like that right off the bat. Maybe later, in the heat of a disagreement, but not within the first minute of speaking. This helps us to eliminate the erroneous rendering here and elsewhere where such an incorrect rendering is detrimental to understanding what is being said in such places as the book of Proverbs, where the word *kiç'îlâh* is found with relative frequency). One of the most important points to get from this is that every portion of the Word of God is important, from the words of this friend of Job who is spouting some things which are correct and some things which are not; to these long genealogical lists; to the details given us in the sacrifices of the various animals.

All that being said, let me point out that being open-minded is not necessarily an attribute. In fact, it is human viewpoint that those who are open-minded are superior in their evolution as human beings over those who are dogmatic and close-minded. It is correct to be dogmatic and close-minded when speaking the truth, God's Word. *For you are my hope, O Y^{ehowah}, my confidence from my youth* (Psalm 71:5). "*For there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:12). *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men—the man, Christ Jesus* (I Tim. 2:5). Now I realize that in saying all of this, certain ones of you who are entirely wrong in 99% of your theological thinking now think that this is the go-ahead to be close-minded about these things you are wrong about; and will probably further interpret this to mean that you can now be irritating and bull-headed when speaking to others about these things. If you are accurate in your theology—that is, if you agree with me, then you are allowed to be dogmatic about that which you believe. Still, this does not give you the right to be argumentative and generally irritating when speaking theology to family members, to believers and to unbelievers. There is a time for debate, certainly, but not nearly as often as you think. And when your dogmatism serves to lead unbelievers away from the truth, then you are dead wrong in your behavior. Let me be as clear as I can on this: unbelievers do not agree with Bible doctrine simply because they are unbelievers. Therefore, you have not been called to argue fine points of theology with unbelievers. What an unbeliever needs, regardless of his position on anything, is the gospel. Then, what happens after that point in time is between himself and God and still does not require you to become argumentative. *If possible, so far as it depends upon you, be at*

¹⁰ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 293.

¹¹ *Job*; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 43.

peace with all men (Rom. 12:18). For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God, but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow-partaker of it (I Cor. 9:19–23).

**“Recall, please,
who, one [who was] innocent, perished:
And where are upright ones cut off?**

Job 4:7

**“Call to mind, if you will,
who of the innocent has wrongly perished?
And where are upright ones cut down?**

First of all, one could say that the innocent do perish, as every man perishes; however, let me quickly add that no man is innocent. We are born in sin and we continue to sin. All men are cut down, upright (saved) or not. Perhaps, Eliphaz is suggesting that those who are saved and lead decent lives, those men do not die prematurely or those men are not put under tremendous hardship.

In the experience of man, up until that point in time, those who were related to God appeared to receive blessing, and those who were opposed to God did not. Eliphaz appeals to Job to examine what Job has known for the past hundred years or so through simple observation of the justice and the rewards of God. Bildad expresses the same sentiment in Job 8:20: “Look, God will not reject a person of integrity; nor will He strengthen the hand of the recalcitrant.” Elihu: “God does not keep the wicked alive, and He gives justice to the afflicted. He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne, He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.” (Job 36:7–8). And, generally speaking, those who are growing and positive believers are blessed by God, often in observable ways. David wrote: *I have been young and now I am old; yet I have not observed the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread* (Psalm 37:25). Or: *As for me, You uphold me in my integrity and You set my in your presence forever* (Psalm 41:12). *No harm befalls the righteous, but the recalcitrants are filled with trouble* (Prov. 8:21).

Scofield summarizes quite succinctly: *Vv. 7–8 state the chief theme that all three of Job’s counselors elaborate—namely the innocent do not suffer. They insist that because the suffering comes from sin, Job, who was suffering so acutely, must be a great sinner. Although these counselors speak eloquently and at times truly, they do not really understand Job’s problem.*¹² Barnes concurs: *This declaration contains the essence of all the positions held by Eliphaz and his colleagues in this argument. This they considered as so established that no one could call it in question, and on the ground of this they inferred that one who experienced such afflictions, no matter what his professions or his apparent piety had been, could not be a good man. This was a point about which the minds of the friends of Job were settled; and though they seem to have been disposed to concede that some afflictions might happen to good men, yet when sudden and overwhelming calamities such as they now witnessed came upon them, they inferred there must have been corresponding guilt. Their reasoning on this subject—which runs through the book—perplexed but did not satisfy Job, and was obviously based on a wrong principle.*¹³ (You see why Scofield is known as the master of brevity).

Barnes also writes: *“There must have been,” is the meaning of Eliphaz, “something wrong, when such calamities come upon a man, and when his faith gives way in such a manner. It would be contrary to all the analogy of the divine dealings to suppose that such a man as Job had professed to be, could be the subject of overwhelming judgments; for who, I ask, ever perished, being innocent? It is a settled principle of the divine government, that no one every perishes who is innocent, and that great calamities are a proof of great guilt.”*¹⁴

¹² *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; C.I. Scofield, D.D.; Oxford University Press, ©1967, pp. 574–575.

¹³ *Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1*; Baker Books, ©1996; pp. 144–145.

¹⁴ *Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1*; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 144.

It is a matter of simple observation. God is righteous and perfect, as is His plan. Job has been suddenly engulfed by misery and pain so acute that all four of them are taken aback. Simple observation of everyday life tells you that God will prosper the righteous and punish the wicked. Job's three friends may not know what the problem is exactly, but it obviously can't be with God, so that only leaves Job to blame. What is ignored by them—and this may not be their fault, is the angelic conflict. Now we are privy to the angelic conflict and they unseen world as a matter of revelation, not as a matter of observation. Those who observe the angelic conflict are probably not those with whom you should have a close relationship. Now, just because we cannot observe something, does not mean it doesn't exist. We have numerous examples of this in our world. We personally have never been to, say, Warsaw, but we know it exists. There are stars and planets that no man has ever seen, not even with a telescope, but we know they exist. When it comes to the unseen, no one has ever observed a soul. Now, doctors have observed what could be indicative of the soul leaving the body—that is, the sudden cessation of electrical impulses from the brain (i.e., the patient flat-lines), but they did not observe the soul leaving the body—only the physical manifestation which suggests such a thing has occurred. Let's become much less technical—we know other people have thoughts and emotions, but we cannot see these thoughts and emotions because it is a part of the unseen world. This does not make it any less real. In fact, the ancient Greeks taught that true reality is what is not seen, and that the physical world that we live in is, at best, a crude representation or shadow image of what is real. So even the empiricists who doesn't believe that something exists unless he sees it must admit that there is a great unseen reality, as he observes the results of the thoughts and emotions of his fellow human beings each and every day. Therefore, it is not some tremendous leap of faith to believe that there might be another unseen reality out there—this being the existence of angels.

Now, I need to point out that we should not be so harsh concerning Job's friends. Apart from judging, they are not committing any great sins—and even the judging of Job is understandable (no less a sin, but understandable). They all lived in a time of very limited revelation. How much they knew about the angelic conflict could, at best, come from Gen. 3 and Gen. 6. Job is the greatest believer of his day, and he does not know what is going on. We are blessed beyond belief to have the entire Word of God from which to draw from. It is because of the incidents in the life of Job that we have a better grasp of the severity and the solemnity of the struggle in which we are engaged. The average Christian at best might go to church a couple times a week and attempt to be moral most of the time. Their knowledge of Scripture is abysmal; and most believers, after salvation, immediately sin, and are not filled with the Holy Spirit but a dozen times after salvation. The conflict in which we are engaged is far greater and should receive much more attention from us than we give. The sufferings of Job are far greater than we can even imagine—it should gives us pause to realize that the angelic conflict in which we are involved is of the greatest importance and that our lives are being observed and that our lives make a difference in the angelic conflict. People's souls and their eternal destinations are intertwined inexorably with our lives and decisions. There will be those who you pretend are your friends who will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire under great judgment and you have given them no reason for the confidence which lies within you. Many of the choices that you make in this life are so shallow and selfish that you are an embarrassment to Jesus Christ, your Savior.

Now, you may think what I am saying here is that you need to get out and tell everyone you know about Jesus Christ. Well, yes and no. If the Christian way of life to you is morality, then you may want to keep your faith in Jesus Christ a secret. If you lack integrity in your business dealings; if you slough off at work; if you treat those to whom you are related with disdain and disrespect; if you abuse those people with whom you have chosen to make a life; if you gossip and malign others on a regular basis—then, no—you needed tell anyone else about Jesus Christ. Keep it under your hat. Keep it a secret. If you have believed in Jesus Christ, then you do have eternal life. You won't ever loose that, no matter how sub-mediocre your Christian life is. However, if you get with God's Word; if you keep short accounts with God concerning your sins (that is, you name your sins immediately and frequently to God), then by all means give those around you a reason for the confidence which lies within you.

From this verse, McGee has an observation and a wonderful application: Now we know this insinuation [of Eliphaz] is wrong and was not true of Job because at the beginning of the book God gave us that scene in heaven so that we might know Job and understand his character. These friends will be miserable comforters because they did not understand God, they did not understand Job, and they did not understand themselves. There are too many people who try to deal with spiritual matters who are not qualified to do so. Very candidly, that is one of the reasons I am reluctant to counsel folk. My feeling is

*that if a person is a child of God—unless it is a technical matter, a theological matter or some physical difficult—it can be settled between the soul and God. We don't need to go to the third person. After all, we have an Intercessor with God.*¹⁵

Along the same lines, Thieme would not meet with and counsel people. He acknowledged that he had very good advice—excellent, in fact—advice that was rarely followed. Our spiritual lives are carefully designed. Our gifts and our abilities perfectly complement the others in the church. We are encouraged by God's Word to meet regularly in order to exercise these gifts and so that we don't become antinomian. Whereas the teaching of Bob Thieme was far superior to that which could be found in most areas, when a church of those who sat around a tape recorder became available, that is where believers should have gathered. We learn to play off of one another and we learn not to be such obstinate pains in the butt. On the other side of the fence, we have those who want to run to their free counselor—their pastor—every time that there is a problem. The pastor (1) does not necessarily have the ability to counsel you; (2) he will likely not know all of the ramifications of your problems and be ill-suited to advise you for that reason; and, (3) we are to lead our lives before God. God has given us enough doctrine and guidance to be spiritually self-sustaining. We fail when we have to run to some counselor who gives us advice that we do not follow. When we deal with our own problems as instructed by God's Word which we have learned while filled with the Holy Spirit, then we are fulfilling God's plan and glorifying Him.

As usual, people take this the wrong way, or misapply it. There are some who do not believe that they should ever be sick and others who will not go to a doctor or they will not allow a doctor to perform certain procedures on them because they think that would manifest a lack of faith in God. This application is so confused, it is hard to know where to begin. When it comes to the great healings performed by Jesus Christ, let us recall that this was confined to a very limited area in the world—Judea—during a very limited time span; three years. These healings were both symbolic of the spiritual healing which our Lord gave and they were His credit cards to prove that He was the Messiah. Because the change of dispensation was so radical—the authority of spiritual matters resting solely in God's Word, the shifting of the responsibility for the dissemination and preservation of truth to the church from Israel—that the Apostles, at first, were given the gifts of healing. These gifts were their credit cards. However, with the completed canon of Scripture, we know the relationship between Israel and the Church, between prophecy and the trends of history. We now know that we belong in a church and not a synagogue. Therefore, with the completed canon of Scripture, we no longer need these gifts of healing, whose purpose was primarily to shift the authority of that time period and to point to spiritual healing. Only secondarily were the healings of that day used to alleviate pain and suffering. If that had been the primary purpose, our Lord could have waved His hand and all illness over the entire earth would have disappeared instantly—and for all time, if He had so decreed. He did not.

When I began losing my vision due to cataracts at a very early age (39), I did not know what was going on. I did go to an eye clinic and found out that was the problem. I did not begin praying to God to heal my cataracts. I went to my medical plan and had two separate operations on my eyes. Now, throughout the procedure, before and after, I prayed to God to guide the hand of the surgeon and prayed for the correct lens inserts. There were a million things which could have gone wrong. However, once both of my eyes were done, I could see both close up for normal reading and I could see a reasonable distance in the daytime in order to drive, unaided by glasses. So, rather than spend the next fifty years praying to God to heal my eyes, I both prayed and took the appropriate steps, and I believe that God chose and guided my physicians and the technicians whom I never met, and gave me better vision than I had ever had in my entire life. My going to the doctors did not demonstrate a lack of faith; my going through with the operation, after seeing one performed on public television, showed that I had faith. My second eye doctor was so happy with the job that he did that he sent me to his colleague for an eye exam to show off the job that he did (prior to the second operation, I could read if I held up the paper roughly an inch from my face; now I could read unaided by glasses). In eternity past, God knew who I was and made provisions for my life. He knew then where I would live and He knew what technology would be available at that time. All this figured into His plan. In previous dispensations and in previous times, the medical field was less advanced and things which doctors can do now were hardly even imagined several hundred years ago. However, the advancements made in medicine were known to God in eternity past and they are a part of His plan for you today.

¹⁵ Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 43.

Finally, there is absolutely nothing in the Bible which specifies that we are not allowed to take any medicine and we are not allowed to undergo any medical procedures. There is no guidance in the Bible which specifies limited use of medicine (say aspirin and caffeine) and there is no guidance in the Bible when it comes to limited procedures allowed by doctors (say, the setting of bones or the drilling of teeth). And, along the same lines, there are no technological limitations specified in the Bible. This is for the fraction of one percent who feel that driving along in a horse and buggy is as technologically advanced as God desires us to be. Now this does not mean that you don't have the right to draw the line in terms of how much technology that you want in your life; just don't attribute that to any spiritual decision. I have been able to put together my study of the Word of God due to the use of a computer. Because of the way I think and write, word processing is perfect for me. I can draw from many sources and organize the material and revise the order and presentation as I see fit. All of this is technologically based. For years, my spiritual growth came from listening to a tape recorder because I had nothing else. That was technologically dependant. And, my, how I have strayed. Let's get back on track.

**“Like [those] whom I have seen,
plowers of iniquity and sowers of misery—
they reap it.** Job 4:8

**“For instance, those whom I have observed,
plowers of iniquity and sowers of misery—
they reap iniquity and trouble.**

Eliphaz later makes it clear that he is relatively ignorant of the angelic conflict. **“For affliction does not come from the dust and neither does trouble sprout from the ground.”** (Job 5:6). It is certainly true that man does make a great deal of his own trouble and misery, but it is also true that a great deal of that pain and misery comes from living in the devil's world. You might ask why doesn't God just remove Satan and then allow us to give it our own try unhindered. All that is tied to the angelic conflict. God is graciously answering why is He righteous to condemn the very creatures that He made to the Lake of Fire forever. This is why the fallen angels are allowed to participate in some ways in the activity of this world. However, we will also be given a chance—that is, mankind will be given a chance—to function on this earth apart from the influence from Satan and his demon army and in perfect environment. That time period is called the Millennium. Not only will there still be rebellion against God, but when let loose for a short time, Satan will still lead some men in revolt against God. At that point, Satan and his angels will be cast into the Lake of Fire. My point being, in all of this, is that some trouble and affliction does appear to sprout out of the ground because its source is invisible.

Man has three systems of perception: empiricism, rationalism and faith. In the first, man determines what is true from what he observes. This is the position of Eliphaz. However, in the previous verse, we discussed that there are flaws in basing one's entire philosophy upon empiricism. We are fully aware that there is a reality which we cannot observe—simply due to the fact that we can think and emote and these things are not seen, alerts us to the fact that there is more in this world than just what we are able to observe. So Eliphaz is wrong from the outset—he begins with a faulty premise. He bases his argument upon what he has observed. And, in rationalism, when you begin with a faulty premise, you will eventually come to a faulty conclusion. No one can be a true philosophical empiricist as their very arguments must proceed via a deductive and/or inductive process, which is the essence of rationalism. And no one can be simply a rational empiricist or a pure rationalist, as 70 to 95% of everything that we know is based upon faith. Some unbelievers point out in their arrogance that they do not believe in God because God has never revealed Himself to them. God has never called them on the phone, sent them a telegram or appeared to them in a great vision. However, the flaw in this argument is that if God revealed Himself to them through, say, a great sign or miracle, how would they know that it was God? We know that Satan comes to us as an angel of light and if he has the ability to work at least seeming miracles, then how would the unbeliever be able to distinguish that it was God coming to him and not Satan posing to be God? It is not like the unbeliever has some point of reference on which to hang all of this most basic differentiation. Furthermore, we have seen that even when God comes with great signs and miracles, that is no guarantee that man will believe (e.g., the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus, who all observed the same signs and miracles as the Israelites did; furthermore, the Israelites who observed these signs—although they were believers—were among the least of the believers in the history of man).

Eliphaz asserts that it is obvious from personal observation that one reaps what one sows. *If they sow wheat, they reap wheat; if barley, they reap barley; if tares, they reap tares.*¹⁶ He later makes a similar point: “*They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity and their appetites prepare deception.*” (Job 15:35). For the unbeliever, this is the case. *He who sows iniquity will reap emptiness and the rod of his fury will perish* (Prov. 22:8). *You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies, because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors* (Hosea 10:13). *For they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind* (Hosea 8:7a). *Do not be deceived—God is not ridiculed; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap* (Gal. 6:7). This same principle is repeated throughout Scripture in different ways: *He had dug a pit and hollowed it out; and he has fallen into the hole which he made. His own mischief will return upon his own head and his violence will descend upon his crown* (Psalm 7:15–16). *The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made; in the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught* (Psalm 8:16). This is not true for the Christian; the believer in Jesus Christ reaps what God sows. *The recalcitrant earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness receives a true reward* (Prov. 11:18). *For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life* (Gal. 6:8).

Another most serious flaw in the argument of Eliphaz is that man does not necessarily receive his just rewards here on earth. Barnes wrote: *his inference was too broad when he concluded that all the wicked are punished in this manner...His reasoning was of a kind that is common in the world—that of drawing universal conclusions from premises that are too narrow to sustain them, or from too few carefully observed facts.*¹⁷ For those who have studied geometry, this is known as an inductive argument, which is sometimes true and sometimes false. A deductive argument, when based upon true premises is always true. Now, even though the Bible affirms, in some way, that what Eliphaz said was true—that does not mean that every recalcitrant will receive his just rewards here on earth where we can see. In fact, from observation, we know that it just isn’t true. People do get away with murder. There are white collar criminals who, even when caught, do not receive what they deserve for their crimes. An argument that Blacks have made against whites for a long time is that a white person who murders is less likely to be executed for his crime than a person of color. We know from the Bible that all first and second degree murderers should die for their crimes, after being properly brought through due process (vigilantism and personal retribution is never taught in Scripture).

**“From the breath of God they perish
and from spirit of His anger are consumed.**

Job 4:9

**“By the breath of God they perish
and by spirit of His anger are consumed.**

The first substantive means *breath*; this is not the word for *spirit*, although it is close. Strong’s #5397 BDB #675. The first substantive in the second line is *rûwach* (רוּחַ) [pronounced *ROO-ahkh*], means *wind, breath, spirit*. Strong’s #7307 BDB #924. *The figure is taken from the hot and fiery wind, which, sweeping over a field of grain, dries it up and destroys it.*¹⁸ From God’s breath, these who sow misery and iniquity are destroyed. Eliphaz makes a similar argument down the road: “*He will not become rich, nor will his wealth endure; and his grain will not bend down to the ground. He will not escape from darkness. The flame will wither his shoots and by the breath of His mouth he will go away. Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself; for emptiness will be his reward.*” (Job 15:29–30). Again, as we have seen, this is fundamentally true. *But with righteousness, He will judge the poor and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips, He will slay the recalcitrant.*” (Isa. 11:4). *And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming* (I Thess. 2:8). In quoting the last verse, I had a half-baked thought: just as we receive life when God breathes it into our being (i.e., He breathes *out*), perhaps the poetic notion here is that our life is removed when God removes the breath from our mouths (i.e., He breathes *in*)? In any case, this does not mean that we will personally observe this on earth nor does it mean that every person who is suffering in this life does so due to their personal iniquity.

¹⁶ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 145.

¹⁷ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 145.

¹⁸ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 146.

As we have seen before, the word for *spirit* can also mean *breath*. *The figure was probably taken from the violent breathing which is evinced when the mind is under any strong emotion, especially anger. It refers here to any judgment by which God cuts off the wicked, but especially to sudden calamity—like a tempest or the pestilence.*¹⁹

**“A roar of a lion and a voice of a fierce lion;
and teeth of young lions have been broken.**

Job 4:10

**“A roar of a lion and a voice of a fierce lion;
and teeth of young lions have been broken.**

We do have a similar passages in the Psalms: *O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; break out the fangs of the young lions, O Y^ehowah* (Psalm 58:6). *They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion...save me from the lion's mouth* (Psalm 22:13, 21a). *He is like a lion that is eager to tear, and as a young lion lurking in hiding places* (Psalm 17:12). My original thinking is that the point Eliphaz is making is that is does not matter how strong and fearsome the recalcitrant person appears to be, they will be brought down by God.

I must admit to being nonplussed by this verse and the next. Barnes is of the opinion that this refers to vicious and predatory man. His reasoning is threefold: (1) Harm and calamity do not fall upon the lion more often than any other beast of the land—in fact, they are less likely to suffer such calamity. (2) The supposition that the words of Eliphaz refer to man rather than to animal would fit well with the context of his argument. (3) Scripture and the writings of Orientals, Greeks and Romans often compare evil and vicious men to uncontrolled and fierce animals. *Eliphaz means to say that men of savage temper, and cruel dispositions, and untamed ferocity, were cut off by the judgments of God.*²⁰

What is surprising is that there are five different words in the Hebrew for the *lion*. This would indicate clearly that at one time, the lion was native to the land of Canaan, and probably in great numbers. As I have mentioned before, this land has undergone some tremendous changes over the past several millennia. At one time, this was a Land of Promise, throughout the majority of the mideast, with great vegetation and a whole host of animals, including lions. This is supported by the fact that *hundreds of lions and panthers were used in the Roman amphitheatres* during those days.²¹

It does make sense for the teeth of the young lion to be broken. It makes less sense for the roar and the voice of the lion to be broken. What happens is that the breath of God causes the roar of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion to come to an end. This must be seen as a contiguous whole. *“According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it. By the breath of God, they perish. Furthermore, by the blast of His anger, they come to an end, both the roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion. And the teeth of the young lions are broken. The lion perishes for lack of prey and the whelps of the lioness are scattered.”* (Job 4:8–11). Again, the *lions* in this verse are probably predatory men with no sense of morality.

**“A strong lion perishes out from no prey
and whelps of a lioness are separated.**

Job 4:11

**“A strong lion perishes out from no prey
and whelps of a lioness are scattered.**

Again, this is all accomplished by the breath of God. The point in all of this that Eliphaz is making, is that if God can with His breath, route the fierce lion, then certainly God has control over those workers of iniquity. Barnes mentions that there are 400 words in the Arabic language for *lion*. In this passage, we nearly exhaust the diversity of terms for *lion* found in Scripture.

Even men who are strong and are heads of their world, still have areas of weakness. The strong and brave lions are still affected by having no food to eat. Their lives are dependent upon having prey. God will see to it that, at some point in time, they will no longer have other men to prey upon. In these five illustrations of Eliphaz, he gives five different lions, all great and mighty in strength, all of whom will fall when it is their time. Barnes writes: *The*

¹⁹ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 146.

²⁰ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 146.

²¹ Keil & Delitzsch's Commentary on the Old Testament; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 293.

sense is that the lion in no condition, or whatever name indicative of strength might be given to it, had power to resist God when he came forth for its destruction. Its roaring, its strength, its teeth, its rage, were all in vain...when the old lion is destroyed, the young ones flee, and are unable to offer resistance. So it is with men. When the divine judgments come upon them, they have no power to make successful resistance. God has them under control, and he comes forth at his pleasure to restrain and subdue them, as he does the wild beasts of the desert, though so fearful and formidable.²²

The Lion Chart (the Hebrew Words for Lion)		
The Hebrew Word	Its Meaning	Where in Scripture it is found
'ăriy (אֵרִי) [pronounced uh-REE] Strong's #738 BDB #71	The most common word for <i>lion</i> . Although some have asserted that this word comes from the word <i>pluck</i> , <i>gather</i> , <i>pull</i> ; in reference to the lion's eating habits—pulling his prey apart or tearing its flesh into pieces. Bochart claims that this is incorrect, but that the word comes from the Hebrew word <i>to see</i> , in reference to the vision of the lion or from the fire of the lion's eyes. ²³	Gen. 49:9 Num. 23:24 24:9 Deut 33:22 Judges 14:5, 8, 9, 18 I Sam. 1:23 17:10 23:20 I Kings 7:29, 36 10:19–20 13:24–26, etc. (Over 50 more references)
Shachal (שַׁחַל) [pronounced SHAH-khah] Strong's #7826 BDB #1006	The poetical word for <i>lion</i> . Often rendered <i>fierce lion</i> . This comes from the verb <i>to roar</i> . Bochart is of the opinion that this is a reference to the lion of Syria, which is of a much darker color.	Job 4:10 10:16 28:8 Psalm 91:13 Prov. 26:13 Hosea 5:14 13:7*
K ^e phîyr (כִּפְיָר) [pronounced k ^e -FEER] Strong's #3715 BDB #498	This means <i>young lion</i> ; a lion which has been weaned from its mother and is just beginning to hunt.	Judges 14:5 Neh. 6:2 Job 4:10 38:39 Psalm 17:12 34:10 35:17 58:6 91:13, etc. (Over 20 more references).
Layish (לַיִשׁ) [pronounced LAH-yish] Strong's #3918 BDB #539	This is usually translated <i>old lion</i> , but the inference is to bravery and strength, rather than to old age.	Job 4:11 Prov. 30:30 Isa. 30:6 This same word is found as a proper name for the tribe of Dan (Judges 18:7, 14, 27, 29) and as the father of Michal's husband (I Sam. 25:44 II Sam. 3:15)*
Lâbîy' (לַבִּי') [pronounced law ^b -VEE] Strong's #3833 BDB #522	This refers to a <i>lion</i> or <i>lioness</i> , depending upon the gender. It comes from the word <i>to roar</i> .	Gen. 49:9 Num. 23:24 24:9 Deut. 33:20 Job 4:11 38:39 Isa. 5:29 30:6 Hosea 13:6 Joel 1:6 Nahum 2:11*

McGee explains this passage simply: *He is saying that those who sow evil seed are going to reap a harvest of evil, and they are going to perish like the young lions that have broken teeth and like the old lions that can no longer stalk their prey.*²⁴

²² Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 147.

²³ These explanations given by Bochart came from Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 147, where they are cited properly.

²⁴ Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 44.

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The Extraordinary Experience/Vision of Eliphaz

**“And to me a word was secretly brought
then my ear received a whisper of it.**

Job 4:12

**“And to me a word was secretly brought
then my ear received a whisper of it.**

The first verb is the Pual imperfect of *gānaʿ* (גָּנָא) [pronounced *gaw-NAH^BV*], which generally means *to steal*. The Pual is the passive intensive and here this means *to be secretly brought, to be brought by stealth*. Strong's #1589 BDB #170.

What the ear of Eliphaz received was a *whisper*. What he received was less than an audible voice; but he clearly had some kind of religious experience. Gesenius gives this word's meaning as *a sound quickly uttered, a transient sound*. This word is only found again in Job 26:14. Strong's #8102 BDB #1036. According to Castell, it means *a sound confused and feeble, such as one receives when a man is speaking in a hurried manner, and when he cannot catch all that is said. This is probably the sense here. Eliphaz means to say that he did not get all that might have been said in the vision. It occurred in such circumstances, and what was said was delivered in such a manner, that he did not hear it all distinctly. But he heard an important sentiment, which he proceeds to apply to the case of Job.*²⁵

The Septuagint is quite different at this point. V. 12 reads, instead, *But if there had been any truth in your words, none of these evils would have befallen you. Does my ear receive excellent revelations from Him?* However, this loses the entire tenor of this passage.

What Eliphaz is presenting here is that God has spoken to him in this hair-raising (see v. 15) and mystical (see vv. 13–15) dream (v. 13), from whence he has received the *inspired* doctrines which he is about to impart. Now we should not be too hard on Eliphaz in this passage. There was little or nothing by means of inspired Scripture. What we had then had been passed down by word of mouth at the beginning of Genesis, which may or may not have been in any sort of distribution (we just don't have that information). Throughout the Old Testament, people have been contacted by God in a myriad of ways—this is all prior to the completed canon of Scripture. Therefore, it would be difficult to determine what came from God and what did not. One had to compare it to what was known about God, which was minimal. What we did have is that we were less than ten generations after the flood where Noah's sons had died less than five generations prior. Therefore, we were very close to the flood and not too far from creation either (perhaps another nine or ten generations?). So God communicated to mankind through dreams, visions, audible speech, through Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate form (generally as an angel). Therefore, Eliphaz mentioning this experience is not a cause for giving him a sidelong glance. Today, with completed revelation, with the Bible being all the communication that a believer needs, then we should avoid like the plague people who have Jesus speak directly to them, either through dreams, visions or sitting down with them right before *Lavern and Shirley* comes on. However, in the time of Job and Eliphaz, we still received direct revelation from God.

Now Eliphaz has already stated his position: **“Recall now, who has ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble also harvest it. By the breath of God, they perish.”** (Job 4:7–9a). This dream of his is by way of support, so that it doesn't appear that this viewpoint is not simply his personal philosophy, but confirmed by a revelation to him. Now, in the examination of this passage, unlike Moses, Abraham or Elijah, Eliphaz will stop short of saying that this mystical experience came directly from God. He touts it as an experience unlike any other, but he does not categorically claim that this is divine revelation from God to him.

Eliphaz does expand somewhat on what he has already said. To prepare you for this, let me give you a brief synopsis of what Eliphaz will say: Job has stated that his life is in shambles and he has no idea as to why. He does not admit to any wrong doing, other than a soul that is confused, betrayed, abandoned and possibly even a little

²⁵ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 148.

bitter. In fact, there is a certain amount of self-confidence which Job belies when he claims that God has hedged him in. Eliphaz's position is that God is so righteous and so pure, that He is far above all of His creatures, even the angels which He created. In fact, God cannot trust man or His angels. God charges His angels with error, so how much less perfect is man? *The design for which this is introduced here is, evidently, to reprove what he deemed the unfounded self-confidence of Job. He supposed that he had been placing an undue reliance on his own integrity; that he had not a just view of the infinite holiness of God, and had not been aware of the true state of his own heart. The highest earthly excellency, is the meaning of Eliphaz, fades away before God, and furnishes no ground for self-reliance. It is so imperfect, so feeble, so far from what it should be, that it is no wonder that a God so holy and exalted should disregard it.*²⁶

It is here that we have to be careful. God's righteousness is such that He cannot fellowship with us, due to our inherent and personal sin. The angels that fell will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. However, there are the angels of His who have not fallen, who are without sin. We have several instances of God entrusting them with revelation and tasks to be accomplished on this earth. We, who have been created far lower than angels and who have fallen as did the fallen angels, are given even greater responsibilities in this life. God has entrusted us with the resolution of the angelic conflict through obedience to His plan. In other words, like most opinions and philosophies of man, no matter from where they have been derived, what Eliphaz has to say has some elements of truth and some elements of falsehood. Satan's greatest attacks upon mankind are filled with elements of truth. For those who recognize the solemnity of our relationship to God and the importance of our place on this planet, Satan has given us the Catholic Church (along with many other *Christian* religions). Satan takes a great deal of truth and mixes it with just enough error to render its congregation spiritually powerless. The most simple example is confession—we return from sin to fellowship with God by naming our sins to God directly. In the Catholic Church, these sins are named to a priest and one is given penance to perform to gain God's forgiveness and to show God our sincerity of soul. Therefore, these people get out of fellowship and they **never** get back in again. You can't be forgiven of your sins and cleansed from all unrighteousness unless you acknowledge your sins to Him. I question whether the addition of works to confession might neutralize the confession. That is, we are forgiven on the basis of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, not because of our sincerity and promises and penance. I am wondering if the addition of these things might not impinge upon our forgiveness even though we name our sins to God. So that there is no misunderstanding, at this point, I am thinking and questioning out loud, not stating anything dogmatically.

Some philosophical notions with which we can toy is: *did Eliphaz actually receive some sort of vision, or is this mere poetic rambling?* As we have seen, God spoke to man in a number of different ways; visions coming to a person in the night is not so out of the ordinary *in terms of type* as to preclude this from the realm of divine revelation. Man today still has dreams and religious experiences. I recall a religious experience which I had when I was probably ten or so, and likely prior to becoming a believer in Jesus Christ. It was profound and moving and remains with me to this day, almost forty years later. I had an experience a year or three after moving to Houston, back in the late 70's or very early 80's which, while not supernatural, was quite extraordinary. So there is no reason to think that Eliphaz did not have such a vision or experience. However, more importantly, was this some psychological experience, a vision inspired by Satan or his demons, or was it from God? My first response to that is that what Eliphaz experienced was not directly from God. We don't have information from this vision which is 100% accurate doctrinally. Now, even though Eliphaz is giving his interpretation of what it was that he learned, our experience with the prophets of God is that when God communicated with them, then they both understood what He was saying and could communicate it; or, if they did not grasp what was being said (e.g., Jacob's dream, the dream of the pharaoh of Egypt during the time of Joseph), they were able to communicate the vision or dream accurately to someone else who could interpret the information accurately.

Now I do want to give you Barnes' take on this, as, once in a great while, he is incorrect. *All that was spoken was in accordance with the truth everywhere revealed in the Scriptures, though Eliphaz perverted it to prove that Job*

²⁶ *Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1*; Baker Books, ©1996; pp. 147–148. You will have to forgive me for my continued lengthy quotes from Barnes. Barnes is so eloquent, yet speaks so to the point of most every verse, that I can't help but quote from him here more than any other author throughout the book of Job. His thoroughness is exemplified by his introduction to the book of Job, which is nearly 80 pages itself.

was insincere and hypocritical. The general sentiment in the oracle was, that man was not pure and holy compared with his Maker; that no one was free from guilt in his sight; that there was no virtue in confidence; and that, therefore, all were subjected to trials and to death. But the general sentiment he proceeds to apply to Job, and regards it as teaching, that since he was overwhelmed with such peculiar afflictions, there must have been some secret sin of which he was guilty, which was the cause of his calamities.²⁷ The key here is why would God communicate this information to Eliphaz? What purpose did God have by communicating directly to Eliphaz? Was he a prophet of God; did he record Scripture? Is there any indication that Eliphaz taught doctrine as a result of this vision? Satan, we know, comes as an angel of light. Satan also comes to disseminate just enough falsehood to distort and disable the truth. As was mentioned, the Catholic Church, in many of its official doctrines, is right on the money, doctrinally speaking. However, Satan has seen to it that there is enough error in their doctrine to render them, for all intents and purposes, ineffectual. God does not bring truth to man so that man can distort it. When God appeared to the Patriarchs and to the prophets, it was so that they could disseminate the truth accurately to their generation and record it in Scripture, than we might grasp our place in this world. Now, certainly men seize upon truth and distort it to their own personal whims, which we see done continually with God's Word; but in this case, God has not brought divine revelation to them specially, as was brought to Eliphaz. God has provided it as a witness against them and their sinful thinking. Therefore, my opinion is that this vision was given by Satan, knowing that, even though the greater portion of it is true, that it would be misapplied and misinterpreted by Eliphaz. Satan is phenomenal in the field of psychology, and can determine a great many things that we will do through a quick, precursory, psychological examination of us. He is not God and he is not a prophet; but his intelligence is far greater than we can imagine. Whereas we can, through a thorough investigation and study, predict the behavior of certain people; Satan can do this much more quickly with much less effort.

**“In thoughts out from visions of a night
in the falling of deep sleep on men.**

Job 4:13

**“In thoughts from visions of the night
in the falling of deep sleep on men.**

The thoughts mentioned by Eliphaz are thoughts which divide and distract the mind; this is not clear, linear thinking, but the kind of thinking which takes one off on tangents. It means *disquietings, disconcerting thoughts*. Strong's #5587 BDB #972. Eliphaz felt all of this when late at night. What came to him was this quiet bit of revelation. The *deep sleep* experienced by Eliphaz was the same *deep sleep* that God placed Adam under when He performed some *modified cloning* Eve from his rib (Gen. 2:21).

Elihu himself makes some comments himself quite later in the book of Job which appear to deal with this vision, or with visions in general: “Indeed, God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds—then He opens the ears of men and seals their commitment.” Job 33:14–16).

There are a couple of ways to look at this passage. One is that Eliphaz is making more of this experience than he ought. He has had this seemingly profound religious experience which really communicated little or nothing to him. On the other hand, you can view it as an experience which was profoundly moving, even though it was not necessarily spiritually edifying. The latter view is the one which Barnes takes: *It is impossible to conceive any thing more sublime than this whole description. It was midnight. There was solitude and silence all around. At that fearful hour, this vision came, and a sentiment was communicated to Eliphaz of the utmost importance, and fitted to make the deepest possible impression. The time; the quiet; the form of the image; its passing along, and then suddenly standing still; then silence, and then the deep and solemn voice—all were fitted to produce the profoundest awe. So graphic and so powerful is this description, that it would be impossible to read it—and particularly at midnight and alone—without something of the feeling of awe and horror which Eliphaz says it produced on his mind.*²⁸ Again, this does not mean that the vision was from God; just that it was tremendously moving and emotionally stirring.

²⁷ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 148.

²⁸ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 149.

**“Dread came upon me and trembling
and the multitude of my bones filled with
dread.**

Job 4:14

**“A shiver of horror ran through me;
that made even my bones shake with dread.**

Rather than pick this verse apart word-by-word, I'll give you a representative sampling of other translations:

Albert Barnes	Fear came upon me, and trembling, Which made all my bones to quake.
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones shake.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Dread came upon me and trembling, The multitude of my bones it put in dread.
NAB	Fear came upon me, and shuddering that terrified me to the bones.
NJB	A shiver of horror ran through me and filled all my bones with fright.
NIV	Fear and trembling seized me and made all my bones shake.
REB	Terror seized me and shuddering; it made my whole frame tremble with fear.
Owen's Translation	Dread came upon me and trembling and the great quantity of (all) my bones filled with dread.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	Fear hath me, and trembling. And the multitude of my bones cause to fear.

The point is that this contact which Eliphaz made with the other side was at night, in secret, unobserved by others, but this was no minor, sleep-driven experience; Eliphaz felt fear and dread to his very bones. Job, in realizing that his life is not a dream, but that he has gone from being the richest man of his area to a broken man, eaten up by disease, sitting on an ash heap, is far more disturbed, and more rightly so than Eliphaz. **“Even when I remember, I am disturbed, and horror take hold of my flesh. Why do the wicked live and continue on, and become very powerful. Their descendants are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes.”** (Job 21:6–8).

Habakkuk had a similar experience of dread when he knew that the Chaldeans would invade Judah and, at that point in time, there would be nothing which could be done. I heard and my inward parts trembled; at the sound, my lips quivered. **Decay enters my bones and in my place I tremble, because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise and invade us** (Habak. 3:16).

**“And a spirit passed by against my face;
the hair of my flesh bristled up.**

Job 4:15

**“As the apparition glided past my face
the hair on the back of my neck stood up.**

The thing which brushed by the face of Eliphaz was rūwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced *ROO-ahkh*]; it means *wind, breath, spirit, apparition*. Strong's #7307 BDB #924. It was as though a wind blew across his face, except that it was more substantial. Throughout the history of mankind, even in the most civilized of societies, people have believed in the existence of spirits; i.e., disembodied beings. And, although I have never taken a poll, I wouldn't be surprised if a majority of people believed in a spirit world. A Christian with doctrine believes in angelic creation, which are spirit beings which, for the most part, we cannot see (we have some scattered instances in the Bible when angels have been seen by man and a period of time—Gen. 6—when demons did have physical forms capable of copulation).

This first verb is given several renderings: *doth pass* (*Young's Translation*), *glide* (Owen), *floated along* (Rotherham), *brushed across* (REB) and *slip* (NJB). It is given so many renderings because it appears to have quite a number of meanings. This is the Qal imperfect of chālaph (חָלַף) [pronounced *chaw-LAHF*], which means *to sprout up* (among other things). In the KJV, we have such Qal renderings as *stricken through* (Judges 5:26), *go on forward* (I Sam. 10:3), *groweth up* (Psalm 90:6), *is over* (SOS 2:11), *shall change* (Habak. 1:11), *shall be changed* (Psalm 102:26). BDB gives the essential meaning as *pass on, pass away, pass through, to come on anew, to sprout again* (the latter two dealing with grass). Strong's #2498 BDB #322. Eliphaz continues to emphasize that this was quite an experience. I have a tendency to knock these experiences nowadays, as we have the complete, revealed Word of God. God did forget a few things whereby he has to contact us periodically and

fill in the gaps. However, there was no complete Word of God during the time of Job. At best, there was a portion of the book of Genesis.

The hair standing on end because of fright is found throughout all literature. Barnes gives the following explanation: *The cause may be, that sudden fear has the effect to drive the blood to the heart, as the seat of vitality, and the extremities are left cold, and the skin thus contracts, and the effect is to raise the hair.*²⁹

**“It stood [still] and I could not recognize its
appearance;
a form before my eyes;
silence, and a voice I heard.**

Job 4:16

**“It remained motionless, and yet I could not
discern its appearance;
a form before my eyes;
there was silence, but I heard a voice.**

The second verb is the 1st person singular, Hiphil imperfect plus the negative of *nâkar* (נָכַר) [pronounced *naw-KAHR*], and it means *to regard, to recognize, to acknowledge*. Some translators render it *discern, distinguish*. Strong's #5234 BDB #647. What follows is the word *appearance* with the masculine singular suffix, *its*.

Then we have the word for *form* and the preposition *neged* (נֶגֶד) [pronounced *NEH-ged*], which means *what is conspicuous*. With the *lâmed* prefixed preposition, it acts as a preposition that means *in front of, before, in the sight of, in the presence of*. Strong's #5048 BDB #617.

Let me give you some of the other renderings at this point, as Rotherham says something quite different and then he affirms it in his footnote:

Albert Barnes	It stood—but its form I could not discern; A spectre was before mine eyes; There was silence, and I heard a voice—
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	[The spirit] stood still, but I could not discern the appearance of it. A form was before my eyes, there was silence; then I heard a voice, saying,...
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	It stood still, but I could not distinguish its appearance, I looked, but there was no form before mine eyes,—A whispering voice I heard:—
NAB	It paused, but its likeness I could not discern; a figure was before my eyes, and I heard a still voice;
NJB	Someone stood there—I did not know his face, but the form stayed there before my eyes. Silence—then I heard a voice.
REB	A figure halted there, whose shape I could not discern, an apparition loomed before me, and I heard a voice murmur:...
The Septuagint	I arose and perceived it not; I looked, and there, was no form before my eyes; but I only heard a breath and a voice, saying...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	It standeth, and I discern not its aspect, A similitude is over-against mine eyes, Silence! and a voice I hear:

The difference between the renderings is acceptable here. Eliphaz knew that he had experienced something incredible, paranormal, from God, dispensing wisdom to him. He could not describe the form that he saw; it was not clear enough to him to distinguish what it was. It brushed by him and it stood still. There was a form yet not a form; there was a voice, yet there was silence. Because Eliphaz heard and saw this, although he wasn't certain what it was that he saw and heard, he believed that it was real and that this was a revelation from God. Now, there are times that such an occurrence has been an act of God. **And, observe, Y^ehowah was passing by! And a great and strong wind was tearing at the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before Y^ehowah; Y^ehowah was not in the wind. And after the wind there was an earthquake—Y^ehowah was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire; Y^ehowah was not in the fire; and after the fire, there was a sound of a gentle blowing. And it came to pass when Elijah heard this that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and he went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Then, observe, a voice came to him and said... (I Kings 19:11b–13a).** However, just

²⁹ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 150.

because we have a similarity of *modus operandi* does not mean that this vision is from God. You know what? We don't even know when this occurred. This could have even happened while Eliphaz was sitting silently with Job. What is interesting is that Eliphaz does not attempt to describe in more detail what it was that he saw. The reason being is that he couldn't and he certainly didn't feel that embellishing the vision with a description would help. As Barnes wrote: *A less perfect imagination would have attempted to describe the form of the spectre, and would have given an account of its shape, and eyes, and colour. But none of these are here hinted at. The subject is left so that the imagination is most deeply impressed, and the whole scene has the aspect of the highest sublimity.*³⁰

Okay, now, what should we be getting out of all this? It is common in both Rabbinic tradition and Christian tradition to speak of that still, small voice within us that speaks to us. You know what that voice is, don't you? That is whatever your old sin nature wants to do coming out and telling you, most of the time. If we want guidance in our lives, we simply need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, through rebound, and our souls need to be filled with the Word of God. We don't need to stand around in a quiet place listening to that still, small voice within. There are people who continually pray for guidance and listen for that voice and most of the time this is no better than tossing a coin. Now don't get me wrong—when faced with two or three options and I was uncertain, I have prayed about these options and most of the time, God closed the door on the other options. God does answer prayer, but we have to be most careful when thinking that God is going to speak to us and tell us what to do. People who listen for those things are usually dealing with areas of their lives which are comparatively trivial. Often these people are not filled with the Holy Spirit, they don't know enough doctrine to come in out of the rain; and the choices that they make are essentially between evil 1 and evil 2. We get this application because not only does Eliphaz listen to this still small voice, but it is accompanied by a great deal of fanfare. There is no question in his mind but that he is being spoken to by some spirit bringing him truth (he does not assert that this is God speaking to him); and I believe him to be sincere in this regard. However, we will observe that what he gets out of this vision is not any big deal and not even 100% correct, which leaves God and His elect angels out of the picture.

Please allow McGee to summarize these last few verses: *My, how Eliphaz builds this up! It sounds so scary. It sounds so frightening. This is going to be something nobody's ever heard before. This is something nobody ever knew before because this man has had a vision. He has seen things. He has had a dream. It was dark and a spirit passed before him. What did it say?*³¹

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What Eliphaz Learned from this Vision

**“ ‘Can mortal man apart from [or, more than]
God be righteous?
If apart from [or, more than] his Maker, is a
man cleaner?’**

Job 4:17

**“ ‘Can mortal man be righteous apart from
[or, more than] God?
Is a man more pure than his Maker?
[or, Is a man pure apart from his Maker?]**

This appears to be what Eliphaz received from his apparition. However, the rendering is somewhat confusing. Let's see what others have done:

Albert Barnes
The Amplified Bible

The Emphasized Bible
NAB

Shall feeble man be more just than God? Shall man be more pure than his Maker?
Can mortal man be just before God, or be more right than He is? Can a man be pure
before his Maker, or more cleansed than He is?
Shall mortal man be more just than God? Or a man be more pure than his Maker?
Can a man be righteous as against God? Can a mortal be blameless against his
Maker?

³⁰ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 151.

³¹ Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 45.

NASB	"Can mankind be just before [lit., from] God? Can a man be pure before [lit., from] his Maker?"
NJB	Can a mortal seem upright to God, would anybody seem pure in the presence of his Maker?
NIV	'Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?'
REB	'Can a human being be righteous before God, a mere mortal pure before his Maker?
Owen's Translation	Can mortal man before (more than) God be righteous? Is it possible before (more than) his Maker can be pure(r) a man?
Young's Lit. Translation	'Is mortal man than God more righteous? Than his Maker is a man cleaner?

This verse begins with the interrogative particle *hê*, written here as *ha* (ה) [pronounced *hah*], and it acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence so that you immediately recognize that what we have here is a question. This particle is no different in semblance to the definite article. Strong's #none BDB #209.

What follows is the masculine singular of *ʿănôwsh* (אָנוֹשׁ) [pronounced *en-OHSH*] and it means *mortal, mortal man, mankind*; this is a word found generally in poetry. Barnes alleges that this word does not mean so much as *mortal man* as *feeble man*; i.e., man liable to disease and calamity.. It is often a word applied to the lower classes of men. Strong's #582 BDB #60. The next word for *man* in this verse will be one which implies *strength*. The following verb is the Qal imperfect of *tsâdaq* (צָדַק) [pronounced *tsaw-DAHK*], and it means *to be righteous, to be just, to be justified*. Strong's #6663 BDB #842.

Let us carefully note is the preposition which precedes the designation God. It is simply the prefixed preposition *min* (מִן) [pronounced *min*], a word which denotes separation (*away from, out from, out of from, off, away from*); and it can also be rendered *on account of, since, above, than, so that not*. In this context, it is used in its *comparative* sense: *above, beyond, more than*. Strong's #4480 BDB #577. Therefore, we have two distinct senses in which this verse might be taken: " 'Can mortal man apart from God be righteous? If apart from his Maker, is a man cleaner?' " Or, " 'Can mortal man more than God be righteous? Is a man cleaner—more than his Maker? In terms of the use of the preposition, the former use is the more common of the two. And, *doctrinally*, I personally prefer the former, although it goes pretty much against every other translation. Additionally, I have no problem with Eliphaz saying that which is the absolute truth now and again. Saying that man is not just apart from God does not have any real bearing on what Eliphaz is saying. As *apart from*, what Eliphaz is saying is very accurate. No man is righteous apart from God; our righteousness depends entirely upon God. Any unrighteousness in our being is a matter of being born into the human race and a matter of free will. Every child, apart from our Lord, exhibits a self-will which is detrimental to himself and to others. No matter how moral we try to be in the future, we cannot undo the immorality and evil that we have committed in the past. Even though it would have been quite insightful on the part of Eliphaz to make this statement, I do not believe that this is what he is saying.

There is a second view presented by some expositors who allege that no one would advance the idea that man is *more* righteous than God, so they claim the quote should be "Can man be pure before God" (or "in the sight of God"). And they appeal to Num. 32:33 Jer. 51:5 Ezek. 34:18 for this use of *mîn*. However, there is a specific prepositional phrase common to the Hebrew when that meaning is required. Furthermore, this interpretation as well as the previous interpretation does not jive with the context of Eliphaz's argument.

The third view, which is correct, and in line with Barnes and most translations, is that *mîn* is used here in the comparative sense. The reasoning here is three-fold: (1) there is a common comparative use of the preposition *mîn*. (2) This is completely in sync with Eliphaz's argument; to wit, it is obvious that Job has fallen on hard times and we know from observation that those who are good are blessed of God and those who are evil are cursed by God. If Job does not fess up to what evil he has done and acknowledge this evil before God, even though it is obvious to everyone that he has done something wrong, then Job is asserting that he is more righteous than God. Job is saying that he is right and that God is wrong in this matter. In other words, it appears from Job 3 that Job is at least implying that he is wiser than God, as he has imputed injustice to the character of God, insofar as His

personal treatment of Job goes. Not only is this reasonable for Eliphaz to say, but this does have application to mankind in general. We have certain divine laws which God has instituted for His government, the administration of government in Israel. These laws, in general, are the perfect set of laws for nations on this earth. However, man continually thinks that his own ways are more righteous and just than God's. A simple example is the death penalty. In our land, the death penalty is unjustly applied to a greater percentage of Blacks than whites who have been charged with the same crime. It is not applied in the case of 2nd degree murder, assault rape and, frequently, not even to first degree murder. It is our contention, by not swiftly applying this simple law, clearly spelled out in God's Word, that we are more righteous than God in this respect. So, therefore, for Eliphaz to make a statement like this is not just totally in line with his train of thought, but it is a statement which can be made of most men. Finally, (3) this rendering of *mîn* is in accord with the Vulgate and the Chaldean translations.

Now I realize that I have gone on and on, insofar as some people are concerned, about one tiny preposition which is but one letter in the Hebrew. However, this has (1) given us greater insight into the argument of Eliphaz; (2) this has given us a change for a relevant tangent concerning man believing himself to be more righteous than God; and, (3) this is God's Word and we should be cognizant of what it says. Furthermore, rather than simply stated that we will go with the comparative use of the preposition *mîn*, this explains *why* that is correct and why other renderings are not. Otherwise, it appears as though I have just flipped a coin or have aligned myself with the majority of the translations.

The second line begins with the hypothetical particle 'îm (אִם) [pronounced *eem*], which means *if*. When part of a quotation, and at other times, this preposition expects a negative response. Strong's #518 BDB #49.

We have the Qal active participle acting as a substantive of the verb 'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form*. Here it means *Maker*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. This again is preceded by the *min* preposition (*away from, apart from, out from, more than*).

The final verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *ṭâhêr* (טָהַר) [pronounced *taw-HAIR*] which simply means *to be cleansed*. In the Qal stem, it does not seem to have the force an active voice, but is almost passive (Lev. 11:32 12:7); and in the Piel stem, it has more of an active force (Num. 8:6, 15 Neh. 13:30 Jer. 33:8). This is the Qal stem in this passage; *can a man be purified [or, cleansed] apart from [or, more than] his Maker?* Strong's #2891 BDB #372.

There is something else that I should point out: Eliphaz has made this big deal out of this vision and then the first statement that he comes up with is about totally basic. There are only a scattered few who actually feel as though their righteousness exceeds God's; and most of them are institutions. Here's what McGee said concerning this revelation: *Now I don't know about you, but I must say I am disappointed. I thought that if a man had had such an experience he was really going to come up with something profound, something that none of us had ever heard before. This is nothing new. I think he really exercised himself a little bit too much to come up with so little....He's in great travail here and you expect him to give birth to a great statement, a profound truth. He comes up with this: Shall a mortal man be more just than God? Of course not. Any of us knows that, and we didn't need a dream or a frightening nightmare to learn it. I don't think it was worth missing a night's sleep to come up with something so trite, so evidence. There is really nothing profound here at all. Yet this is the voice of experience, and there are a lot of folks with the voices of experience today.*³²

Now, although what Eliphaz has to say is only interesting by contrast, what Job will say on the same subject will be profound. "In truth, I know that this is so. But how can a man be justified before God? If one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand. Wise in heart and mighty in strength, who has defied Him without harm? For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no mediator between us who may lay his hand upon us both." (Job 9:2–5, 32–33). Job later says: "Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!" (Job 14:4). Even Bildad has something to add to this: "How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of a woman?" (Job 25:4). And: "Does God pervert justice or does the Almighty pervert what is right?" (Job 8:3). Even Eliphaz says things which are partially correct on this

³² Job; J. Vernon McGee, ©1977, p. 46.

subject: “What is man, that he should be pure; or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?” (Job 15:14).³³ We already know what is divine viewpoint in this matter: Observe, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Observe, You desire truth in the innermost being and in the hidden part, You will make me know wisdom (Psalm 51:5–6). Who can say, “I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin”? (Prov. 20:9). Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and who never sins (Eccl. 7:20). **As it stands written: There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understand; there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside together they have become depraved. There is none who does good. There is not even one** (Rom. 4:10–12 Psalm 14:1–3).

**“Behold, in His servants He does not trust;
and in His angels He places error
[possibly, nor in His angels places he
praise].**

Job 4:18

**“Behold, He does not place any trust in His
servants;
and He places error in His angels.**

This is another verse that I will change somewhat, so I want you to see what others have done:

Albert Barnes	Behold, in his servants he putteth no confidence, And his angels he chargeth with frailty.
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Even in His [heavenly] servants He puts no trust <i>or</i> confidence, and His angels He charges with folly <i>and</i> error.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Lo! In his own servants he trusteth not, And his own messengers he chargeth with error.
KJV	Behold, he put not trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly;
NASB	He puts no trust even in His servants, And against His angels He charges error.
NEB	If God mistrusts his own servants and finds his messengers at fault,...
NJB	God cannot rely even on his own servants, even with his angels he finds fault.
REB	If God mistrusts his own servants and finds his messengers at fault,...
The Septuagint	Whereas he trusts not in his servants, and perceives perverseness in his angels.
Owen's Translation	Even (behold) in his servants he puts no trust and his angels he charges with error.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	‘Lo, in His servants He putteth no credence, Nor in His messengers setteth praise.’

The most effective lies of Satan are those mixed with truth. The first verb is the Hiphil imperfect of *ʾāman* (אָמַן) [pronounced *aw-MAHN*], which means, according to BDB, *confirm, support*. Strong's offers: *build up, support, to foster, to trust*. In the Hiphil, it means *to stand firm, to believe, to trust*. Strong's #539 BDB #52. Along with this verb, we have the negative.

The second verb is the Qal imperfect of *sûm* (סוּם) [pronounced *soom*] (this is also written *sîym* (סִיִּם) [pronounced *seem*]), and it means *to place, to put, to set*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. What is placed in His angels is a word found only here. Strong's #8417 BDB #1062. The closest word in meaning is the word for praise, which has the same consonants, but different vowel points. Strong's #8416 (and 1984) BDB #239. This means that in the original text, they were indistinguishable. It was not until the Massoretic text was in place when the vowel points were established and the problem was certainly obvious to the translators and vowel placers (they must have a title of some sort?). There is a marginal translation (in the KJV?), which reads *Nor in His angels, in whom he put light*. This one word is rendered *glorying* (Walton), *wickedness* (Jerome), *fault, blemish* (the Septuagint), *default, defection* (Good), and *frailty* (Noyes). In terms of making a choice here, I am at a loss. What Young does is continue the negative from the first line and bring it into the second: **Nor in His messengers setteth praise**. We must carry the negative down to the next line or act as though there is a word different from *praise* here. Under the latter rendering, we do not have a poetic repetition of the same thought (which we have not seen yet anyway in Eliphaz), but another statement. God does not place His trust in His servants nor does he place praise in his angels. Eliphaz restates this position again in Job 15:15: “Observe, He puts no trust in His holy ones; and the heavens are not pure in His sight.”

³³ Eliphaz will draw the wrong conclusion in that passage, even though what I have quoted is correct, doctrinally speaking.

With the NIV, NEB and REB, we have the concept of v. 18 being a prodisis for v. 19. This ties them together quite handily, but there is no word for *if* in v. 18.

I should mention at this point, Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible, but since so much of it is an expression of human viewpoint, probably brought into the Hebrew from a different language, that we will never zero in on a really outstanding translation. In a book of Paul, this would be a tremendous loss; in this book, it is an occasional setback.

Also, as a point of interpretation, there is the implication given in *The Amplified Bible* that *servant* here refers to God's servants from heaven, making servants = messengers = angels. In contrast to the next verse, this does make sense as an interpretation. Here's the idea; Job recognizes that he is decidedly inferior to angels. If God is much more holy than his angels, in whom He places no trust; then God is infinitely superior in His judgment of Job. Eliphaz is not alleging that God just simply knows what He is doing in regards to the disposition of Job. To that we could agree. His argument goes to the point that Job is suffering because of some unrighteousness and that God is obvious righteous in causing Job to so suffer.

So, here is the interpretation of this passage: Eliphaz begins with a reasonable conjecture: "**Can man be more just than God? Can a man be purer than his Maker?**" (Job 4:17). Although this is not the stuff great revelations are made of, it is true in fact. However, the conclusion of Eliphaz is incorrect. Eliphaz is speaking of angels here as though they are fallible, like man, but not necessarily totally depraved. Eliphaz speaks of angels as though they are unreliable. This just isn't the case. First of all, man and angels are tremendously different. Elect angels do not have an old sin nature nor have they ever sinned against God. Fallen angels are demons who are in constant rebellion against God. When it comes to elect angels, God trusts a great deal to them. **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?** (Heb. 1:14). Furthermore, God has allowed for the angelic conflict, in part, for their benefit. That is, once human history is over, it will be adjudged by all that the sentence of Satan and his demon forces was just and that God is righteous in all that He does. There will be no coercion in this conclusion on the part of man or angels—it is a conclusion that we will all arrive at individually. Even the demons burning in the Lake of Fire will be forced to admit the justness of it all.

Not only is the conclusion made here by Eliphaz incorrect, but Bildad later takes this conclusion and runs with it; using it for the premise of his own argument: "**If even the moon has no brightness and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man—a maggot! And the sons of man—a worm!**" (Job 25:5–6). A faulty conclusion, when used as a premise, leads to another faulty conclusion. However low we are on the totem pole, God sent His Son to be our Savior and to pay for our sins and wrongdoing on the cross. This indicates that God was willing to give everything on our behalf.

<p>"How much less dwellers of houses of clay which [are] in the dust their foundation— they are crushed before the faces of a moth- worm.</p>	<p>Job 4:19</p>	<p>"How much less regard is given to the inhabitants of houses of clay whose bodies are but a dust foundation— their bodies are crushed before the presence of moths.</p>
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Again, this is a difficult verse which demands that we look at some other translations:

<p>Albert Barnes</p> <p><i>The Amplified Bible</i></p> <p><i>The Emphasized Bible</i></p> <p>KJV</p>	<p>How much more is true is this of those who dwell in houses of clay Whose foundation is in the dust! They are crushed before the moth-worm!</p> <p>How much more those who dwell in houses [bodies] of clay, whose foundation is the dust, who are crushed like the moth.</p> <p>How much more the dwellers in houses of clay, Which in the dust have their foundation, Which are crushed sooner than a moth;...</p> <p>How much less <i>in</i> them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation <i>is</i> in the dust, <i>which</i> are crushed before the moth?</p>
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Owen's Translation How much more those who dwell in houses of clay in the dust whose foundation who are crushed before a moth.

Young's Lit. Translation Also—the inhabitants of houses of clay, (Whose foundation is in the dust, They bruise them before a moth.)

The first word in this verse is 'aph (אֵפֹה) [pronounced *ahf*] and it means *also, yea, even, indeed*. It is used in two primary ways: (1) a surprise is then mentioned or the unexpected is said. (2) A reference is made to a preceding sentence and it is expanded or emphasized and we would translate this word *yea, in fact, à fortiori, the more so, how much more* (following an affirmative clause), *how much less* (following a negative clause), *furthermore*. The latter use is the way that we should interpret this word. Strong's #637 BDB #64. What we have here again is a faulty conclusion being based upon a faulty premise. Since God does not entrust His angels with any real responsible, how much less reliable is man? How much less important is man?

Then we have the Qal active participle of the word *to dwell*, so that it is here used as a substantive, and should be rendered *dwellers, inhabitants*. Strong's #7931 BDB #1014.

The phrase *houses of clay* is literal, but *The Amplified Bible* correctly gives the sense of what Eliphaz is saying: he is referring to the bodies of man, not our physical home. Job and his friends are not citizens of adobe village; these *houses of clay* that we live in are our bodies. This picture is *as affecting as it is beautiful*. *A house of clay...was little fitted to bear the extremes of heat and cold, or storm and sunshine, of rain, and frost, and snow, and would soon crumble and decay. It must be a frail and temporary dwelling. It could not endure the changes of the seasons and the lapse of years like a dwelling of granite or marble. So with our bodies. They can bear little. They are frail, infirm, and feeble. They are easily prostrated, and soon fall back to their native dust. How can they who dwell in such edifices, be in any way compared with the Infinite and eternal God?*³⁴

Paul uses a similar analogy, comparing a person's body to a tent. *For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed, in this tent, we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven* (II Cor. 5:1–2).³⁵ This is a further area of inferiority when compared to angels. Angels have these spirit bodies, capable of tremendous space travel; and we have these bodies of clay.

The next phrase is literally *which [or, whose] in the dust their foundation*. The foundation of the body is simply the elements of the earth and ground; this was common knowledge to man of that time period. Long before science verified this, Genesis and Job, the two oldest books of the Bible, tell us that our bodies are made of the same elements as are found in the ground. Job affirms this in Job 10:9: *"Remember now, that You have made me as clay; and would You turn me into dust again?"*; as does Elihu in Job 33:6: *"Observe, I belong to God like you; I too have been formed out of the clay."* Now, apart from my chemistry classes in high school and college, I would have viewed statements like this with suspicion, thinking them to be grounded in superstition. However, from the very beginning in Scripture, it is confirmed that we are made of the same materials and chemicals as are found in the earth: *Then Y^howah God formed man out of the dust from the ground, and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives; and man became a living soul* (Gen. 2:7). *"By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground; for from it, you were taken, for you are dust."* (Gen. 3:19). This is from two books which are roughly 5000 years old, yet they stand before you scientifically accurate. And they were influential. Many years later, the Greeks used the same verbiage. Aristophanes (Erostophanes?) used the phrase *vessels of clay*.

The verb which follows is *dākā'* (דָּכָא) [pronounced *daw-KAW*], and it means *to crush*. Strong's #1792 BDB #193.

I do not completely understand the next phrase, *before the faces of a moth*. Possibly, the moth is often used to represent that which is temporary or transitory, sometimes a willing participant in the temporality of man's clothing.

³⁴ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 153.

³⁵ Plato also spoke of our bodies as being an *earthly tent*; the Greeks were very close to the truth in their perception of the world, which is why some Catholic doctrine is derivative of Greek philosophy. The Catholics did, in part, get some of their doctrine from Greek philosophy, which was, a distortion of the truth.

Barnes points out that the Vulgate uses a word for the moth which flies, but that this word in the Hebrew refers to the moth worm, the larva state. The picture that Barnes paints is that we are so feeble as to be at the mercy of something as feeble as a worm. Then he describes the nerve-worm which is found in Guinea and Yemen and how devastating that this worm can be to human life.³⁶ I do not know if this is the proper meaning of v. 19, but then I don't have anything better to offer.

**“Between morning and evening they are
pulverized [into dust];
on account of there being none to save,
forever they perish.**

Job 4:20

**“Between morning and evening they are
pulverized into dust;
without any fanfare, forever they perish.**

Again, this verse is difficult to unravel so we will take a look at what others have done:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Between morning and evening they are destroyed; without any one noticing it they perish for ever.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Betwixt morning and evening are they broken in pieces, With none to save they utterly perish;...
NASB	Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces; Unobserved, they perish forever.
NJB	They are crushed as easily as a moth, between morning and evening they are ground to power. They vanish for ever, with no one to bring them back.
REB	[which can be crushed as a bird's nest], torn down between dawn and dusk. How much more shall they perish unheeded for ever,...
Owen's Translation	Between morning and evening they are destroyed; without any regarding it for ever they perish.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	From morning to evening are beaten down, Without any regarding, for ever they perish.

You will notice that the NJB appends v. 20 with the end of v. 19, tying the two together. REB also ties the two lines together. However, *moth* is properly a masculine singular and the following verb is a masculine plural; therefore, the verb more logically refers to the *dwellers* or *inhabitants* of the houses of clay.

The first verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Hophal imperfect of *kâthath* (כָּתַח) [pronounced *KAW-THATHH*], which means *to beat, to crush by beating*. This is the verb whereby plough shares are beaten into swords (Joel 4:10). Here, given the object of the verb as the inhabitants of the houses of clay, *ground into dust, beaten into dust* are good renderings. Strong's #3807 BDB #510.

The Hophal is the passive of the Hiphil (causative stem). It is the rarest of the seven stems. There is never a hint of reflexive in this stem and the agent of the verb is often not given in the immediate context. Zodhiates writes: *The Hophal stem conveys at once both an active and passive sense, active with respect to the action being done, passive with respect to the object being made to do so.*³⁷ I do not follow that exactly. Most grammar books call it simply the causative passive stem.

So that we are not confused, a person's body is not pulverized for 14 hours—from morning to evening. The sense of morning to evening is twofold: there are a lot of people out there who die from morning to evening; this expression

³⁶ See *Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1*; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 153 wherein Barnes describes these worms that are as thin as a thread, they dwell inside a person's body, and are two or three feet long. They often emerge from the body through the skin. One must be careful to allow the worm to wrap itself are a piece of straw or wood and completely leave the human body, a process which takes a week. If this worm emerges without being broken, everything is fine. When the worm is broken, it withdraws itself back into the body, with lameness, gangrene or death as the eventual result. I have seen pictures of these worms in a magazine of their emergence from the skin and it gave me the heebie geebies. For a more graphic description and more thorough explanation, refer to *Barnes Notes* and it seems the pictures were in Time magazine circa 1996–1997.

³⁷ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; p 2276.

makes this a continual, ongoing process with humanity as a whole. Secondly, the brevity of man's life is emphasized by the expression *from morning to evening*.

The second line begins with the *mîn* preposition and the negative *b'îy* (בִּי) [pronounced *b'LEE*], and together they mean *from want of, for lack of, on account of there being no, from the deficiency of no, so that there is no*. Although most of the translations have the rendering *without*, this, according to BDB, is the meaning when *b'îy* is alone or combined with the *bêyth* preposition. Strong's #1097 BDB #115.

The verb to which this negative belongs is the Hiphil participle of *sîym* (סִיַּם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. The problem is that BDB suspects that the text of Job 4:20 is corrupted at this point. Therefore, I will depend upon Rotherham, who cites Gesenius, and renders this: *with none to save*. Although I could not confirm this in Gesenius, I do not have a better rendering here.

The final verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of the verb which means *to perish* (which we examined in Job 3:3). In contrast to this continual process of man being pulverized day in and day out, all day long, in this line, man perishes *forever*. Once a man has died, we no longer see him.

*Without any regarding it. Without its being noticed. How strikingly true is this! What a narrow circle is affected by the death of a man, and how soon does even that circle cease to be affected! A few relatives and friends fell it and weep over the loss; but the mass of men are unconcerned. It is like taking a grain of sand from the sea-shore, or a drop of water from the ocean. There is indeed one less, but the place is soon supplied, and the ocean rolls on its tumultuous billows as though none had been taken away. So with human life. The affairs of men will roll on; the world will be as busy, and active, and thoughtless as though we had not been; and soon, O how painfully soon to human pride, will our names be forgotten! The circle of friends will cease to weep, and then cease to remember us. The last memorial that we lived, will be gone. The house that we built, the bed on which we slept, the counting-room that we occupied, the monuments that we raised, the books that we made, the stone that we directed to be placed over our grave, will all be gone; and the last memento that we ever lived, will have faded away! How vain is man! How vain is pride! How foolish is ambition! How important the announcement that there is another world, where we may live on for ever!*³⁸

This was a difficult verse to unravel, but the meaning is fairly simple—day in and day out, men, created out of dust, are ground back into dust and they perish. Death is no big deal; it occurs again and again. It is a part of life. Man's life is temporal and preserved by a thread. These is also a theme found throughout Scripture: *You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep. In the morning, they are like the grass which sprouts anew. In he morning, it flourishes and sprouts anew; towards the evening, it fades and withers away* (Psalm 90:5–6). Job himself said, "Man, who is born of a woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain" (Job 14:1–2). "They are exalted for a little while, then they are gone. Furthermore, they are brought low and like everything gathered up; even like the heads of grain, they are cut off." (Job 24:24). *You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away* (James 4:14). *For what is man that you remember him? Or the son of man that You would be concerned about him?* (Heb. 2:6 Psalm 8:4).

**"Is not plucked up their tent-cord in them;
they not die?
And not with wisdom.**

Job 4:21

**If their tent-cord is taken up, do they not
die?
And do they not die lacking wisdom.**

The final verse of this chapter is also difficult:

Albert Barnes

Is not the excellency that is in them torn away? They die before they have become wise.

³⁸ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 154.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Is not their tent cord plucked up within them [so that the tent falls]? Do they not die, and that without <i>acquiring</i> wisdom?
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Is not their tent-rope within them torn away? They die, disrobed of wisdom!
NKJV	'Does not their own excellence go away? They die, even without wisdom.'
NJB	Their tent-peg is snatched from them, and they die devoid of wisdom.
The Septuagint	For he blows upon them, and they are withered; they have perished for lack of wisdom.
Owen's Translation	If their tent-cord is plucked up within them, do they not die and that without wisdom?
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	Hath not their excellency been removed with them? They die, and not in wisdom!

This verse begins with the interrogative and the negative; so it begins *is not*...

Obviously we have no little disagreement on the first substantive. Rotherham suggest *tent-peg* or *tent rope*. It is whatever is removed from a tent which causes the tent to collapse. Here, the soul is taken from the body, causing the body to collapse into a heap, just like a tent. The reason for the disagreement on this substantive is that it is the word *yether* (יֶתֶר) [pronounced *YEH-ther*] and it is rendered *excellency* (Gen. 49:3 Prov. 17:7), *residue*, *rest of*, *remainder* (Ex. 10:5 Lev. 14:17 I Kings 11:41 12:23), and *cord* (Judges 16:7 Job 30:11 Psalm 11:2). It is not clear to me how one would tie these meanings together. However, the most common usage appears to be *residue*, *remainder*. In this context, the tent-peg seems so apropos and poetic. Strong's #3499 (3498) BDB #451. Also, as we have seen, the idea of a tent as a representation of our body which houses our soul is a theme carried throughout Scripture. Job uses that analogy himself in Job 8:22: "Those who hate you will be clothed with shame; and the tent of the wicked will be no more." Hezekiah wrote: "Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; as a weaver, I rolled up my life. He cuts me off from the loom from day until night You make an end of me." (Isa. 38:12).

The verb is the Niphal perfect of *nâça'* (נָצַח) [pronounced *naw-SAHÇ*], which means *to pluck up*, *to remove* (in the Niphal). It denotes the pulling up the stakes of a tent. Strong's #5265 BDB #652. The use of this verb makes the translation of *tent-peg* or *tent-rope* more reasonable.

This is followed by the prepositional phrase, *in them*. Our soul resides in our bodies and when it is removed, our bodies collapse—just like the removal of a tent rope from a tent.

The last verb is the word *to die* in the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect. Strong's #4191 BDB #559.

The last phrase is the conjunction, the negative, the *bêyth* preposition (*in, at, by, with*) and the word for *wisdom*. Therefore, it should be rendered: *and not with wisdom*. The contrast which Eliphaz set up was between man and angels. Man is alive for so little time on this earth that he has no real opportunity to develop any sort of true wisdom, as angels must have. Yet God does not even trust his angels, so how can He trust man with anything? And if man's time is so short on this earth, how on earth is man qualified in any way, shape or form to comment upon God's judgments?

This is in direct contrast to Job and his three friends. People die all the time; and most of them die without wisdom—that is the knowledge of God. Eliphaz is not finished yet, however; this is just the arbitrary ending of the chapter.

Now, even though what Eliphaz has presented here is a combination of truth and human viewpoint, there are points in the chapter which he made that we ought to be cognizant of (and these are taken from Albert Barnes): (1) *That man cannot be more just than God; and let this be an abiding principle of our lives;* (2) *Not to murmur at his dispensations, but to confide in his superior wisdom and goodness;* (3) *That our opportunities of observation, and our rank in existence, are as nothing compared with those of the angels, who are yet so inferior to God as to be charged with folly;* (4) *That our foundation is in the dust, and that the most insignificant object may sweep us away;* and (5) *That in these circumstances humility becomes us. Our proper situation is in the dust; and whatever*

*calamities may befall us, we should confide in God, and feel that he is qualified to direct our affairs, and the affairs of the universe.*³⁹

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³⁹ *Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1*; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 155.