

Job 12

Job 12:1–25

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Introduction: I must admit that Zophar pissed me off and it is likely that he had the same affect upon Job. There are things that Job will say in the next couple chapters which indicate that he is possibly out of fellowship. Job 12 begins a three-chapter response of Job, both to his friends in general and to Zophar in particular. What Zophar had to say got his dander up and Job will give the longest response in the entire book of Job. Only Elihu, the mediator between God and Job, will speak longer. Primarily, Job will be sarcastic and admit that everyone knows that it is God Who has put the hurt on him. Job's answer will be structured like his previous answer as well. He will first speak to his friends (Job 12:1–13:19) and then he will speak directly to God Job 13:20–14:22).

In this chapter, Job first defends his relative intelligence to his friends, as well his knowledge of God. Keil and Delitzsch: *Job replies that the wisdom, of which they profess to be the only possessors, is nothing remarkable, and the contempt with which they treat him is the common lot of the innocent, while the prosperity of the ungodly remains undisturbed.*¹ In the midst of this chapter, he first tells his friends that the essence of much of what they have said—that God is responsible for what has happened to Job—is clear to all and that God's hand in this universe is revealed in His creation, both the earth and the animal population of the earth. Finally, at the end of this chapter, Job then speaks eloquently of the power and sovereignty of God. *He will show the friends that the majesty of God, before which he ought, according to their demands, to humble himself in penitence, is not less known to him than to them.*²

McGee: *This lengthy reply...concludes the first round of discourses. Remember that in Job's day folk enjoyed intellectual competition—men pitting their minds against each other. Today it is not brain but brawn in athletic contests...[Job's three friends] make an attack on Job which forces Job to come back with a defense of himself. They did not introduce God into the scene. They did not speak of a God of mercy and a God of grace, but a God of law. Although He is a God of law, He is also a God of grace and mercy. They brought in experience and tradition and legality, but they didn't bring in the truth. When they brought their incriminations against Job, it caused Job to defend himself and to declare that he was right. The minute Job started justifying himself he was not justifying God. Up to this point it looks as if Job is saying that God is wrong and that God is the One to be criticized. This is a position which many people take today, even many Christian people. The friends should have led Job to condemn himself and to vindicate God. God has recorded all these discourses in His Word to reveal this truth. The utterances of Job will prove how far he was from that true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind which flows from being in the divine Presence. His friends never brought him to the place where he said as Paul said, "I know that within me, that is within my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," or, "I am what I am by the grace of God." There are too many Christians today who boast of who they are and what they have done and how much they give. It looks as if God is on the receiving side and they are on the giving side. It looks as if they rather than God are superior. My friend, we are not witnessing correctly for God—no matter how many people we buttonhole and tell about Jesus—unless you and I take the place where we are condemned and God is vindicated, and God is to be praised*

¹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 374.

² Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 352.

and honored. This is a tremendous lesson in this book.³ When all is said and done, when we have entered into eternity, what will be vindicated is God's perfect character and His perfect plan. Every objection or question which concerned His perfect character and righteousness which we have had or which Satan has lodged against Him will have been laid to rest by that time. Part of our purpose of being on this earth is that we will show that God's every decision is correct and completely in sync with His perfect righteousness and justice and love. Today, the typical unbeliever asks, *what about the heathen who have never heard? What about those who have died before God made the gospel available to them in their language—but they were good people. What about suffering an eternity of pain because one takes a few decades of pleasure?* When we have entered into eternity, those who are in heaven and those who are in hell will fully agree to their placement and have every question that they have ever had answered.

Barnes: [Following his sarcasm, Job]...affirms that he understood the points on which they had insisted...that they had advanced nothing that was new to him, or which he had not often reflected on; that by urging these plain maxims and common-place topics, they had done him an unkindness by undervaluing his understanding, and complains that they had added to his sorrows by inflicting on him these truisms, and compelling him to hear sentiments with which he was so familiar, but which they supposed were profound and novel discoveries. (Job 12:3–5). He then reaffirms his main position (ver. 6), maintaining that the worst of men, so far from receiving the punishment which was their due, were in fact prospered; and then proceeds to show them what he knew of God. They had spoken of his wisdom and power, as if he were ignorant on the subject. He proceeds, therefore, to discourse of the Most High in a manner calculated to make them ashamed of their comparatively obscure and narrow views, and to show that he had reflected on that point much more than they had.⁴ (Job 12:7–13:2).

Keil and Delitzsch: As the friends have failed to solace him by their descriptions of God, so his own description is also utterly devoid of comfort. For the wisdom of God, of which he speaks, is not the wisdom that orders the world in which one can confide, an in which one has the surety of seeing every mystery of life sooner or later gloriously solved; but this wisdom is something purely negative, and repulsive rather than attractive, it is abstract exaltation over all created wisdom, whence it follows that he puts to shame to wisdom of the wise. Of the justice of God he does not speak at all, for in the narrow idea of the friends he cannot recognise its control; and of the love of God he speaks as little as the friends, for as the sight of the divine love is removed from them by the one-sidedness of their dogma, so is it from him by the feeling of the wrath of God which at present has possession of his whole being...The friends conceive of God as the absolute One, who acts only according to justice; Job conceives of Him as the absolute One, who acts according to the arbitrariness of His absolute power. According to the idea of the book, the former is dogmatic one-sidedness, the latter the conception of one passing through temptation. The God of the Old Testament consequently rules neither according to justice alone, nor according to a "sublime whim."⁵

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Job and His Friends

Literally:

Smoother English rendering:

Then Job answer and then he said,

Job 12:1 Then Job answered Zophar by saying,

It is an unusual world that these men come from. They have become antagonistic, yet no one is yelling or jumping into the middle of another person's thought.

³ J. Vernon McGee, *Job*, pp. 79–80.

⁴ Barnes' Notes, *Job*, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 243.

⁵ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 374.

**"Most assuredly, you [are the race of]
people
and with you will die wisdom.**

Job 12:2

**"No doubt you are the race of people with
whom wisdom will die.**

The first word in this sentence is the adverb 'âménâm (אָמֵנָם) [pronounced awm^e-NAWM] and it means *verily, truly*; it is a word used in asseverations [pronounced uh-SEV-uh-RAY-shuns], which is an emphatic assertion. We find this word used in Scripture only nine times, most of them in Job (Ruth 3:12 II Kings 19:17 Job 9:2 12:2 19:4, 5 34:12 36:4 Isa. 37:18).* A change of the first vowel point gives us the same word used as an interrogative instead. However, we need to update this word, as no one uses the word *verily* or *truly* any more. A more modern equivalent would be *certainly, no doubt, indeed, surely, most assuredly, unequivocally, for sure, for certain*. Strong's #551 BDB #53.

Job does not often stoop to a personal attack. He addresses all three of his *comforters* with the 2nd person masculine plural pronoun. Such a pronoun usually comes without a verb, yet acts as though it is the subject of the verb *to be*. On the other end is the object 'am (אַתָּה) [pronounced gahm], which means *people*. It is not the specific word for *Gentiles* nor is it a word which stands for Israel. It is pretty much equivalent to a *race of men*. I'll cover this word in more detail in the future (perhaps Deut. 33:3). Strong's #5971 BDB #766. I am guessing that this is an idiom, much like the idiom *you da man* as used in the late 90's. However, I think this is better understood in the English to leave out the conjunction. What is really meant is "**No doubt you are the [race of] people with whom wisdom will die.**" *The Amplified Bible* renders this: "**No doubt you are the [only wise] people [in the world], and wisdom will die with you!**" To Job, his three compatriots think of themselves and the be-all, end-all. Job makes light of them. When they die out, with them will die wisdom—this is how great they are. Note also the word order of the Hebrew subject and verb. This is the norm in the Hebrew, not the exception.

McGee: *Now there is a sarcastic statement and a pretty good one...[Job's friends] were talking as if Job were a simpleton and they had all the answers.*⁶ This is great sarcasm. His friends have all laid out their opinions. They have assumed they were absolutely right about the sins of Job. There was no question in their mind, even though they were *friends* of Job—the evidence was too overwhelming against him. Job recognized this dogmatism and berated them for it with these words. "Once you are gone, that is the end of wisdom." Job later lets them know how he feels in plain English: "**I do not find a wise man among you.**" (Job 17:10b). Eliphaz uses the same sarcasm later: "**Do you hear the secret counsel of God and limit wisdom to yourself?**" (Job 15:8).

Barnes: [Job is saying, you are]...*the only wise people. You have engrossed all the wisdom of the world, and all else are to be regarded as fools...Job felt contempt for their reasoning, and meant to intimate that their maxims, no which they placed so much reliance, were common-place, and such as every one was familiar with...when a sage intimates that he has superior wisdom, or when he is disposed to rally another for his meagre attainments, he says, 'Yes, yes, you are the man!'*⁷

**"Furthermore, to me heart [or,
understanding] as well as you;
not falling I more than you
and proceeding from whom [are] not these
things?**

Job 12:3

**"Furthermore, I understand this situation as
well as you do;
I am no more sinful than you;
and who does not know these things?**

This verse is going to be trouble, so we need to see the other renderings:

Albert Barnes

Yet I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you; and with whom are there no sayings like these?

⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Job*, p. 79.

⁷ *Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1*; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 244.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these [of God's wisdom and might]?
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	I also have a mind [a heart] like you, I fall not short of you, But who hath not such things as these?
Keil and Delitzsch	I also have a heart as well as you; I do not stand behind you; And to whom should not such things be known?
NJB	But I have a brain, as well as you. I am in no way inferior to you. and who, in any case, does not know all that?
NIV	But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things?
TEV	But I have as much sense as you have; I am in no way inferior to you; everyone knows all that you have said.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	I also have a heart like you, I am not fallen more than you, And with whom is there not like these?

This verse begins with the adverb gam (גַם) [pronounced *gahm*] which means *also, in addition to, moreover, furthermore*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. This is followed by the lamed preposition (*to, for*) and the suffixed 1st person preposition.

The next word is lē^bva^bv (בְּבָבָב) [pronounced *lay^b-V^BAHV*], which obviously come from the Hebrew word lē^bv (*heart*); this word means *mind, inner man*. It appears to be used interchangably with lē^bv but I don't know that is necessarily the case. Emotion can be a part of this word (Deut. 13:3 Isa. 13:2 62:8), although that does not appear to be its primary focus. *Understanding, thinking and intelligence* are the words which should come to mind when finding this word. Strong's #3824 BDB #523. Barnes: *The word heart in the Scriptures is often used to denote the understanding or mind. It seems to have been regarded as the source of that which was called life or soul. Indeed, I don not recall a single instance in the Scriptures in which the word "head" is used, as with us, as the seat of the intellect, or where the distinction is adverted to that is so common with us, between the head and the heart. With us, the heart is the seat of the affections and emotions; with the Hebrews, it was the seat of understanding, and...the bowels were the seat of the emotions...A more correct physiology has taught us that the brain is the organ of the intellect, and we now speak of the heart as the seat of the affections. The Romans regarded the breast as the seat of the soul.*⁸

The next word is the preposition k^emō (כִּמְוֹ) [pronounced *k^eMOH*], which means *like, as, when*; it is equivalent to the kāph prefixed preposition when used before suffixes. Strong's #3644 BDB #455. The suffix is the 2nd person masculine plural. Literally, this is: "**Furthermore, to me intelligence as you [all].**"

The next line begins with the negative and the Qal active participle of nāphal (נִפְלָא) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply, to prostrate oneself before another, to go to ruin*. This is a word with a great many applications, which is why we see this rendered as *inferior to* in many of the English translations. Strong's #5307 BDB #656. This is followed by the personal preposition and then the mīn preposition and the 2nd person plural suffix. Mīn, throughout the book of Job, often has the meaning *more than*. Strong's #4480 BDB #577. Most English version render this line as if it were a continuation or a parallel to the previous thought. It is literally: "**Not fallen I more than you.**"⁹ I don't believe that we are referring back to intelligence but more to Job's sinfulness relative to his friends. Job has told his friends that he is every bit as perceptive and intelligent as they are and he is no more guilty or sinful than any of them. We will see a very similar phrasing in Job 13:2: "**As you know, I know—even I. Not fallen am I more than you.**" Eliphaz will throw this right back at him later, as he did the previous verse: "**What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that we do not?**" (Job 15:9). This tells us that Eliphaz is listening carefully to Job, not to learn or to sympathize, but to be able to throw it back in his face.

⁸ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 244.

⁹ Barnes says the literal rendering is "I do not fall beneath you"; however, this ignores the Qal active participle and translates this as a Qal imperfect.

The third line is the toughest. It begins with the wâw conjunction and the preposition 'êth (וְאֵת) [pronounced *ayth*] and it simply means *with, among, together*. This can also refer to being in one's possession or in one's keeping. This can also mean *to proceed from someone*. Strong's #854 BDB #85. This is followed by the interrogative pronoun *who*. Therefore, we have *from whom, with whom, proceeding from whom*. Then we have the negative. Finally, the last two words are the repeated adverb K̄mō and the plural demonstrative adjective, used as a substantive, 'elleh (הֵלֶה) [pronounced *EEHL-leh*] which means *these things*. *These things* can refer to what has preceded or to what follows. Here, it refers to what has been said by Job's three associates. Strong's #428 BDB #41. Literally, this gives us: "...and proceeding from whom [are] not these things?" The meaning here is that Job's friends have presented themselves as great intellects and men who understand what is going on; Job says, *anyone else would know these things*; that is, they have presented rather innocuous and obvious truths about God that anyone else knows. They understand God's dealings in this world as well as anyone else—but not necessarily better. So far, they have added nothing to Job's understanding. The NIV Study Bible sums it up quite nicely: *The advice of Job's friends is trivial and commonplace.*¹⁰ Barnes: *Instead of being original, the sentiments which they advanced were the most commonplace imaginable.*¹¹

Barnes: *Job...proceeds to adduce a number of proverbial sayings, occupying the remainder of this chapter, to show that he was familiar with that mode of reasoning, and that in this respect he was fully their equal. This may be regarded as a trial of skill, and was quite common in the East. Wisdom consisted in storing up a large amount of proverbs and maxims, and in applying them readily and pertinently on all public occasions; and in this controversy, Job was by no means disposed to yield to them.*¹²

"An object of derision to his associates I am,
calling to God then He answered him, an
object of derision.
A justified one; a blameless one."

Job 12:4

"I am an object of derision to my associates.
Calling to God then suddenly, He answered
him, the object of derision.
Who is, in truth, a justified one; a blameless
one."

In v. 4, we have *an appeal...for the friends [of Job] to consider the true facts in the case, which are the meaningless contradictions of Job's life. He , the just and blameless man, is now the laughingstock, the symbol of forsakenness and even of God's judgment.*¹³

The first word is the masculine singular of s̄chôq (שׁחֹק) [pronounced *s̄KHOHK*], which means *laughter, derision, and object of derision and laughter; a dupe, a laughingstock*. Strong's #7814 BDB #966. Several times throughout the book of Job, Job recognizes how he is looked upon by others: "But He has made me a byword of the people, and I am one at whom men spit." (Job 17:6; see also 30:1, 9–10 34:7). Job is a laughingstock to the masculine plural of a word commonly rendered *neighbor* in the KJV: rēa' (רֵא') [pronounced *RAY-ahg*] and it is a person with whom you come into contact. They might live next door, you might do business with them, you run into them in a store, a restaurant, etc. It is not necessarily, a fellow Jew or a fellow believer, a friend or your next-door neighbor, although these could possibly be included. Here, we will go with *associates*. Strong's #7453 BDB #945. Most commentaries have multifarious references to Job's friends; note that I have called them *companions, associates, compatriots*. They may have been friends at one time. However, even Job here does not refer to them as friends right here. Job herein says that these men do not take him seriously; they are derisive and insulting in their speaking to him. Barnes: *Job complains that he was not treated with due deference. They had showed no respect for his understanding and rank. They had urged the most common-place of topics; advanced stale and trite apothegms, as if he has never heard them...to be approached with vague common-places, and with remarks which as would be used in addressing children, he regarded as insult and mockery.*¹⁴

¹⁰ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995; p. 738.

¹¹ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 243.

¹² Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; pp. 244–245.

¹³ The Layman's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8, Balmer H. Kelly, John Knox Press, ©1962, p. 84.

¹⁴ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 245.

With respect to time, there are two ways of looking at the second line. Job is either referring to what has occurred in the past—that is, he has called upon God and God has answered him; or Job is looking into the future and making a prediction that God would eventually answer him. He has been on hold for a long time for God. When his calamities first struck, Job certainly went into prayer and continued off and on until this point. The Qal active participle indicates a continuous petition before God. Job expects that God will answer him—the man who is an object of derision to his friends. However, to God, he has been justified and he is blameless. “*He will call upon Me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble and I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life, I will satisfy him. Let him observe My deliverance.*” (Psalm 91:15–16).

However, there is another way of looking at the latter portion of this verse. Job’s friends have urged him to go to God, to call upon God. Job, in sarcasm, replies, “How can a man held in such low esteem go to God? How could a person of my questionable character speak to God? Communication with God is reserved for the righteous.”

**“In regards to the disaster, contempt to [the]
reasoning [or, thoughts] of one at ease,
it is preparing for a slipping of a foot.**

Job 12:5

**“In regards to the disaster, there is
contempt in the reasoning [or, thoughts] of
one who is at ease, for the one who is about
to slip himself.”**

The difference between Owens and Young on this verse is severe, so we had better look more carefully at this verse:

Albert Barnes	He that is ready to slip with his feet, In the eyes of him that is at ease, Is as a cast-away torch.
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	In the thought of him who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune; but it is ready for those whose feet slip.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	For ruin there is contempt, in the thought of the man at ease,—Ready, for such as are of faltering foot!
Keil and Delitzsch	Contempt belongs to misfortune, according to the ideas of the prosperous; It awaits those who are ready to slip.
KJV	He that is ready to slip with <i>his</i> feet <i>is</i> as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.
NAB	The undisturbed esteem my downfall a disgrace such as awaits unsteady feet;
NASB	“He who is at ease holds calamity in contempt, As prepared for those whose feet slip.
NEB	Prosperity and ease look down on misfortune, on the blow that fells the man who is already reeling....
NJB	‘Add insult to injury,’ think the prosperous, ‘strike the fellow now that he is staggering!’
NIV	Men have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping.
NRSV	Those at ease have contempt for misfortune, but it is ready for those whose feet are unstable.
Owen's Translation	For misfortune there is contempt in thought of one who is at ease; it is ready (or, prepared) for those whose feet slip.
REB	Those at ease look down on misfortune on the blow that fells one who is already reeling,
The Septuagint	For it has been ordained that he should fall under others for the appointed time, and that his houses should be spoiled by transgressors; let not however any one trust that, being evil, he shall be guiltless.
TEV	You have no troubles and yet you make fun of me; you hit a man who is about to fall.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	A torch—despised in the thoughts of the secure Is prepared for those sliding with the feet.

Obviously the first word is a problem, and that sets the tenor of the verse. The first word, affixed to the preposition *for, to, in regards to*, is the masculine singular substantive of piyd (תִּפְאַד) [pronounced *peed*] and it means *disaster, calamity, ruin*. According to BDB, this word is found in Job 12:5 21:20 30:24 31:29 Prov. 24:22.* According to

The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance this is found in the latter three passages. According to NEHC, this is the word *lapîyd* (לְפִיד) [pronounced *lap-PEED*], which means *a torch, a lamp*. The most ancient translators (Targums, Vulgate, Luther) favored the latter rendering.¹⁵ Keil and Delitzsch said that modern expositors more happily take the former meaning, one of the reasons being is that this is a word which occurs several times in the book of Job. Strong's #6365 BDB #810 (*lapîyd* is Strong's #3940 BDB #542).

The second word is the masculine substantive *bûz* (בּוֹז) [pronounced *booz*] and it means *contempt*, a word found in Gen. 38:23 and more often in the poetic literature. Strong's #937 BDB #100. This is followed by the lamed preposition and the feminine construct of a word which occurs only here and probably means *thought, reasoning*. It is from a Hebrew verb which occurs very little in Scripture, and given a rather long explanation. The verb means *to shine or to make smooth, to make shiny; therefore, it means to manufactor, to fabricate; this came to mean to carefully fabricate a thought in the mind*. Gesenius says that this word is found in the singular in most manuscripts, but in the plural in a few manuscripts and some early printed editions; he rejects the plural because he can find that usage nowhere else, even in the Aramaic. Noun: Strong's #6248 BDB #799 Verb: Strong's #6245 BDB #799. So far, this gives us: "For disaster, contempt to thinking of..."

The adjective which follows is the masculine singular of *sha'änâh* (שָׁאַנְּחָה) [pronounced *shah-uh-NAWN*], which means *at ease, one who is at ease, secure, removed from misfortune*. Strong's #7600 BDB #983. So far, this gives us: "In regards to disaster, contempt for [or, to] [the] reasoning of one who is secure..." There are several ways this can be viewed. (1) Job obviously is not free from disaster, but he is secure in his opinion and in his knowledge. (2) A second, but less likely, interpretation is that Job is the one viewing with contempt the thinking and reasoning of those who are secure from disaster. (3) However, what this apparently means is that: in regards to the misfortune and suffering that Job has endured, there is contempt from the reasoning of the one who is at ease or is secure (that is, any one of his friends). The general idea is that when a person under no pressure observes a person under great pressure, they tend to be judgmental and contemptuous. People who are rich, tend to be contemptuous of those who are poor. People who are healthy and thin have condescending attitudes toward those who are in ill health and overweight. Those whose life is easy and relatively free of problems think that those will trouble have brought it upon themselves. NIV aptly observes: *The prosperous despise those who, like Job, have trouble.*¹⁶ Our soul is greatly filled with the scoffing of those who are at ease, with the contempt of the proud (Psalm 123:4).

He friends have shown nothing but contempt for his reasoning. Also, one thing I am obliged to point out is that you will notice the difference between Job's vocabulary and that of Zophar. Job uses some relatively uncommon words, he uses fewer conjunctions, his sentences are constructed in a way which is less confined than most.

The next word is the Niphal participle of *kûwn* (קָוַן) [pronounced *koon*] and its definition seems to be a little obscure, despite the fact that this word occurs in the Old Testament almost 250 times. It appears to mean *erect (to stand up perpendicular) and by application, to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized*. Strong's #3559 BDB #465. This is followed by the lamed preposition (3rd time in this verse!) and the phrase *a slipping of a foot*.¹⁷ This gives us "In regards to the disaster, contempt to [the] reasoning [or, thoughts] of one at ease, [the one] preparing for a slipping of a foot."

I must admit that I had several different ideas as to what this verse meant.

Various Interpretations of Job 12:5

¹⁵ This has led to the following interpretations (these are taken from Keil and Delitzsch's Job, pp. 350–351): *According to the view of the prosperous and carnally secure, he who is ready for falterings of the feet, i.e., likely to fall, is like a lighted torch which burns away and destroys whatever comes in contact with it and therefore one keeps aloof from him; but it is also more than this: he is an object of contempt in their eyes.* The other thought is that Job *in the eyes of the prosperous...is like a despised, cast-away torch*.

¹⁶ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995; p. 738.

¹⁷ A phrase we also find in Psalm 38:16 73:2.

1. One idea was the Job, saw his friends as men with slipping feet because of their accusations of him,. They are about the slip and fall into the mire that they see him in.
2. A second thought was that with regards to the disaster, Job had contempt for the thinking of his friends, who are free from disaster and prepared for the slipping of a foot.
3. Or Job's friends view his reasoning with contempt, even though he is at ease with his opinions, secure in what he has done; however, the last phrase does not suit that thought.
4. Perhaps Job is just speaking philosophically, not referring directly to himself or his friends here, that with regards to a disaster, there is contempt for those who are at ease, who are secure, who have prepared for a slipping of their foot.
5. However, an examination of the corrected translation helps us here: In regards to the disaster, contempt to [the] reasoning [or, thoughts] of one at ease, it [the contempt] is preparing for a slipping of a foot. In this rendering, it is those who are at ease who have contempt for those suffering great disaster. Their contempt is just waiting for someone to slip. It comes out when the person slips up. One of the chief reasons I spend so much time on the translation, is that it makes the interpretation much easier.

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McGee had the same take on this verse: *Job is a very sick man but he is standing up to these three men. He tells them, "You fellows are in a comfortable position and you are able to give advice to them, but I am slipping, I am falling, and you have not word for me at all." For years I served as a pastor and I realize now how a professional attitude enters into our lives. I would go to the hospital to visit a sick person, perhaps a dying person. I would pat him on the hand and say, "God will be with you," and I would pray for him and say, "God will lead you." Then I'd walk out. Well, the day came when I went to the hospital, not to visit someone, but to lie on that bed myself. When someone came to pray with me and walked out, I didn't walk out. I stayed there. My friend, I want to say to you, that is quite a different position to be in. Now I was in the other fellow's shoes. Now I was in bed and I was facing surgery. That is the time you need someone to help you and to comfort you. That is what Job is needing.*¹⁸

Job continues with the thought of security in the next verse:

**"Tents are content [and at peace] with
regards to thugs [and criminals];
and assurances of security to provokers of
God [`êl] to whom God [`ělōah] brings in
His hand.**

Job 12:6

**"Even common thugs and criminals are
content and at peace in their own tents;
and even to provokers of God, God brings
in His hand assurances of security.**

There is a fairly substantial difference in some of the translations, particularly with regards to the last line, so let me mention them here:

Albert Barnes

Then tents of robbers are secure, They are secure to those who provoke God, To whose hand God brings in abundance.

The Amplified Bible

The dwellings of robbers prosper; those who provoke God are [apparently] secure; God supplies them abundantly [who have no god but their own hand and power].

The Emphasized Bible

At peace are the tents that belong to the spoils, And there is security to them who provoke God, To him who bringeth a god in his hand.

Keil and Delitzsch

Tents of the destroyer remain in peace; And those that defy God are prosperous, Who taketh Eloah into his hand.

NASB

"The tents of the destroyers prosper, And those who provoke God are secure, Whom God brings into his power.

NJB

And yet the tents of brigands are left in peace: those who provoke God dwell secure and so does anyone who makes a god of his fist!

¹⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Job*, p. 81.

NRSV	Then tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure, who bring their god in their hands.
Owen's Translation	Are at peace tents of robbers; and security to those who provoke God, who bring God in his hand.
REB	...while the marauders' tents are left undisturbed and those who provoke God live safe and sound.
The Septuagint	[...he will be guiltless], even as many as provoke the Lord, as if there were indeed to be no inquisition [or, trial] of them.
Young's Lit. Translation	At peace are the tents of spoilers, and those provoking God have confidence, He into whose hand God hath brought.

The first word in this verse is the Qal imperfect of shâlâh (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAW*], which means *to be quiet, to be at ease, to be tranquil, to be at peace, carefree, thoughtless, content, contentment partially due to prosperity*. Strong's #7951, 7952–7955 BDB #1017. The subject of the verb is the word *tents*, a metonym [pronounced *MET-e-nim*] for one's family and possessions. This is followed by the lamed preposition and the Qal active participle of shâdad (שָׁדַד) [pronounced *shaw-DAHD*], which means *to deal violently with, to despoil, to devastate, to ruin*; as a participle, it refers to one who would commit these acts. A one word rendering of this would not be inclusive enough—this could be *a thug, a revolutionary, a criminal, a mugger, a thief*. This is someone whose own personal wants or desires, whose political ideology, far outweighs, in his own mind, the sanctity of your home and family. This is the person that if you have a car, a stash of several thousand dollars, or even a \$10 that he wants, then he will trade your life, security and home for that which he wants. If it makes some kind of a political statement, then he will trade your life to make that statement. Strong's #7703 BDB #994. The picture that Job paints here is a criminal who is at peace in his home. The first line reads: “*Tents are content [and at peace] with regards to thugs [and criminals]...*”

Freeman: *Robbery has from a very early period of history been a common occupation of lawless men, and has also often proved a profitable employment, as intimated by the text. Whole tribes, and in some instances entire nations, adopted it as a means of livelihood. The Sabeans stole Job's oxen and asses, and "the Chaldeans made out three bands and fell upon the camels." Job i, 15, 17. The Shechemites "set liers in wait" for Abimelech "in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them." Judges ix, 25.*¹⁹

Barnes: *The tents or dwellings of robbers are safe and secure. This is Job's original proposition, to which he all along adheres. It is, that God does not deal with men in this life according to their character; and in support of this he now appeals to the fact that the tents or dwellings of robbers are safe. Arabia would furnish many illustrations of this, which could not be unknown to the friends of Job. The Arabs dwelt in tents and the were then, as now, wandering, predatory tribes. They lived, to a great extent, by plunder, and doubtless Job could appeal to the observation of his friends for the proof of this. He affirms that so far from dealing with men according to their character, God often seemed to protect to public robber and the blasphemer of his name.*²⁰

The simple point that Job is making is that peace and prosperity are not necessarily signs of righteousness. Eliphaz disagrees completely: “*For the company of the godless is barren and fire consumes the tents of the corrupt.*” (Job 15:34). To which Job answers: “*The earth is given into the hand of the wicked one; he covers the faces of its judges—if not him, then who?*” (Job 9:24). “*Why do the wicked live, continue on, and become very powerful? Their descendants are established with them in their sight and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear; neither is the rod of God upon them*” (Job 21:7–9). Even Asaph, the psalmist, observed: “*Observe, these are the wicked and always at ease they have increased their wealth.*” (Psalm 73:12; also see Jer. 12:1 Mal. 3:1).

Now, the truth of what Job is saying must be admitted to by all believers from the standpoint of personal observation. We know Christians who have gone through difficult times (sometimes, ourselves)—and in some cases, these hard times are deserved, and in some cases they are not (and, in most cases, we don't know for

¹⁹ Manners and Customs of the Bible; James M. Freeman; ©1972; p. 209.

²⁰ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 246.

certain one way or the other). We also know that there are heathen out there who have material prosperity beyond what we can even imagine. In fact, in the business world, of those who are worth millions of dollars, likely the great majority of them are heathen.

The second line begins with the wâw conjunction and the feminine plural of a word found only here, but closely related to the verb which means *trust*, and the noun which means *security*. This is translated *security* (Owen), *are secure* (KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, Noyes, NRSV), *have confidence* (Young), *are prosperous* (Keil and Delitzsch), and *there is security* (*The Emphasized Bible*). As you can see, the main problem with these translations is that this word is not a verb and it is in the plural. Let's go with *measures of security*, not in reference to personal security systems but to divine security systems; or, *assurances of security*. Strong's #987 BDB #105.

Again with the lâmed preposition and the masculine plural, Hiphil participle of râgaz (רָגֶז) [pronounced *rawg-GAHZ*], which means *to be agitated, to quiver, to quake, to become excited, perturbed, disquieted*. In the Hiphil, *to become enraged, to be caused to disquieted, to be caused to quake, to provoke*. You will notice quite a difference between the meanings *to be caused to be disquieted* and *to provoke*. The difference is the subject and the verb; here is it found with the direct object *God*; no matter who it is, there is no *disquieting* of God. In other portions of Scripture, this has God as the subject (I Sam. 28:15 Job 9:6 Isa. 23:11). Strong's #7264 BDB #919. With the direct object *God*, this gives us: "...and assurances of security to provokers of God..."

Many people who are incredibly rich look upon their riches as something which they have rightfully earned through their own great intelligence and business savvy. God has blessed them materially and God has given them assurances of security. Some of us, having come to Christ the hard way, through personal pain and suffering, may wonder why does not God reach out to all people in that way? We're hard-headed and they're hard-headed—perhaps they could be reached as we were. God knows the heart of man and God knows what it takes to reach any man and God knows what men cannot be reached. Some men, under the worst pain and suffering, would shake their fist and curse God. The same men, under great blessing and prosperity, will ignore God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For such men, God is not under any obligation to try to reach them with all means possible—they will die, they will often face death knowingly with time to ponder what has their life meant and what do they have to take into the next world and that may be the only time during which they are receptive to the gospel. We cannot look into the hearts of man and determine what would it take to reach them. Since **God is not willing that any should perish and that all should come to a change of attitude**²¹ concerning Jesus Christ, we can rest assured that God will reach each and every person by whatever means would possibly work; and for those whose heart is closed to the gospel, then God may or may not bother with them.

The alternate translations of this final portion of this verse are quite different. Barnes names some of them: Eichhorn: "...who regard their fist as their God." Stuhlman: "...and to whom the fist avails for their God." Rosenmüller: "...who have their own hand, i.e., power for God." [a description, says he, of a wicked and violent man who thinks it right for him to do as he pleases]. Dr. Good: "...of him who hath created all these things with his hand." All of these are fanciful and have only a partial basis in the Hebrew.²²

As you have seen, in my literal translation, I have noted that there are two different names for God in this last line. Later in this chapter we will see the very personal name for God, Y^ehowah, used by Job (the only time this occurs in the discussion by Job and his friends). What would be important to us is why do we have different names for God and what do they all mean? Therefore this is a perfect time to introduce the **Doctrine of the Designations of God in the Old Testament—not finished yet!! 34:6; and see Scofield's notes here also).** Yahweh, Elohim, El, etc.

"And assurances of security to provokers of God..." is followed by *to whom* or *for whom* or *with respect to whom*; and finally we have a normal verb; the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect of the very common verb bôw' (בּוּבּ) [pronounced *bo*] which means, in the causative stem, *to take in, to bring, to come in with*. Strong's #935 BDB #97. This is followed by the subject *God* and the prepositional phrase *in His hand*. "...and assurances of

²¹ II Peter 3:9.

²² All of these came from Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; pp. 246–247.

security provokers of God to whom God brings in His hand.” If we rearrange the word order to better suit our English, and add back in v. 5, we have: “In regards to the disaster, contempt to the reasoning of one at ease, preparing for a slipping of a foot. Tents are content and at peace with regards to common thugs and criminals; and [even] to provokers of God, God brings in His hand assurances of security.” The REB points out that there is this additional phrase in the Hebrew, which they and the Septuagint have left out. My guess is that this verse would be unpalatable for some, who do not want to read that God protects and even provides assurances of security to those who stand in direct opposition to Him.

My thinking is that there is a certain amount of security which God provides to all men, even to those who are at odds with Him. I can recall to of the idols which I had as a teenager, Frank Zappa and Mohammed Ali, both of whom were anti-God (Zappa was irreligious and Ali was very religious). God gave each of them a moment under the sun, had prospered both men, who were intensely talented in their own fields, and then God took from them. However, for a point of time, even though they stood in opposition to Him, God gave them some measure and assurances of security. There was a famous atheist, whose name escapes me, who traveled around publically daring God to strike him down and showing that God does not exist because God did not strike him down. There was Madalyn Murray O’Hair, a brilliant woman, and a very vocal atheist, who God gave some measures of security and some assurances of security for a part of her life. God does not go right after those who are in opposition to Him. Most of us wouldn’t make it past 1st grade if He did. God protects all of us to a certain degree. This is not the protection of a father, as He is not the Father of the unbeliever—this is the protection of a loving and just God, Who has died on our behalf, and calls to us in our unbelief, and allows us to live, often long enough to hear this call many times. No one burning in hell, including Satan himself, will point to God and call God unjust. Human history will completely and permanently resolve that conflict. We may have our theological problems now and our questions; however, in eternity, what has occurred on earth will solve every question concerning God’s grace and justice that we will ever have.

Barnes is in essential agreement: ...the common interpretation, which is the most simple, is most in accordance with the Hebrew, and with the drift of the passage. According to this, it means, that there is security to the man who lives to provoke that God who is constantly bringing to him in abundance the tokens of kindness. This is the fact on which Job is insisting—that God does not treat men in this world according to their real character, but that the wicked are prospered and the righteous are afflicted.²³

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All Living Creatures Teach What Job's Friends Have Said

“Indeed, ask please [the] animals and one
[of them] will inform you;
and [the] bird of the [two] heavens and he
will make it pitifully obvious to you.

Job 12:7

“Indeed, why don’t you ask the animals and
one of them will inform you;
and ask the bird of the heavens and he will
make it pitifully obvious to you.

In vv. 7–12, Job appeals to all creation to prove that God does what he pleases—that he does not use a personal piety as the sole basis for granting freedom from affliction.²⁴ This verse begins with the wâw conjunction and the adverb ’ûlâm (וּלְאַם) [pronounced oo-LAWM], which means *but* or *indeed*. Strong’s #199 BDB #19. This is followed by the phrase *ask please beasts* or *ask now beasts* or *inquire now [of the] beasts*. Typical of Job, he varies his use of the language. Whereas the wâw conjunction generally begins and new thought or a new sentence, Job uses it here more as we would in the English, to continue the thought of his. *Beasts* or *animals* is in the feminine plural and the verb which follows is in the feminine singular. What Job tells his compatriots to do is to inquire of even the animals and one (singular) of the animals will cause the following. The verb is the feminine singular, Hiphil imperfect (with a 2nd person masculine singular) of yârâh (הָרָה) [pronounced yaw-RAWH], which means *to throw, to shoot*. In the Hiphil, this means *teach, instruct, inform, enumerate* (Ex. 24:12 Deut. 33:10 Judges 13:8). The

²³ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 247.

²⁴ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995; p. 738.

connection is that we are dealing with the throwing of something in front of someone else. Strong's #3384 BDB #434.

The second line is, literally, *and a bird of the [two] heavens*; meaning for them to ask the birds of the heavens. The wâw conjunction is used as a continuative again. The verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect apocopated voluntative of nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced naw-GAHD], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to declare, to inform, to make it pitifully obvious that*. Strong's #5046 BDB #616. Zophar used this word in his diatribe against Job and Job throws it right back to him. The last words of the verse are *to you*; giving us: “Indeed, ask please [the] animals and one [of them] will inform you; and [the] bird of the [two] heavens and he will make it pitifully obvious to you.” What they will make obvious to you is that the righteous often suffer and the wicked often are prospered. Animals are outside the realm of morality. We certainly train (as we should) our own pets to behave like decent human beings, but their sense of morality is based upon their trust, affection and upon your absolute authority. Properly speaking, animals are not moral or immoral, even though we might ascribe such characteristics to them—and some animals are prospered and some are not.

Throughout Scripture, God uses animals, and nature in general, to teach us fundamental principles. Elihu (the mediator between Job and God) does in Job 35:9–13; our Lord does in Matt. 6:26; and Paul in Rom. 1:20.

Barnes: *Even among the lower animals, the rapacious and the violent are prospered, and the gentle and the innocent are the victims. Lions, wolves, and panthers are prospered—the lamb, the kid, the gazelle, are the victims...The object of Job is to show that rewards and punishments are not distributed according to character. This was so plain in his view as scarcely to admit of argument It was seen all over the world not only among men, but even in the brute creation. Every where the strong prey upon the weak; the fierce upon the tame; the violent upon the timid. Yet God does not come forth to destroy the lion and the hyena, or to deliver the lamb and the gazelle from their grasp. Like robbers...lions, panthers, and wolves prowl upon the earth; and the eagle and the vulture from the air pounce upon the defenceless, and the great robbers of the deep prey upon the feeble, and still are prospered. What a striking illustration of the course of events among men, and of the relative condition of the righteous and the wicked. Nothing could be more pertinent to the design of Job than this appeal, and nothing was more in accordance with the whole structure of the argument in the poem, where wisdom is seen mainly to consist in the result of careful observation...God...does not give security to the gentle, the tame, and the innocent, and punish the ferocious, the blood-thirsty, and the cruel...Those that prey upon others, the eagle and the vulture—are not exposed at once to the divine displeasure, and the tender and harmless are not protected.*²⁵

“Or communicate to the earth and it will
inform you,
and fish of the sea declare [it] to you.

Job 12:8

“Or speak to the earth and it will inform you,
and the fish of the sea declare it to you.

This verse begins with the conjunction or and the 2nd masculine singular, Qal imperative of sîyach (סִיחַ) [pronounced SEE-ahkh], and it means *to communicate, to declare, to speak of, to talk about*. Strong's #7878 BDB #967. The word for *earth* is 'erets (אֶرֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets] is a feminine singular substantive which means *earth (all or a portion), land*. It can mean ① *planet earth* (Gen. 18:18, 25 22:18 Job 37:12); ② *a specific portion of the earth*, such as a *country, region, or territory* (Gen. 11:28, 31 21:21 Psalm 78:12—you will note that in these instances, 'erets is in the construct and generally translated *the land of*); ③ *the ground, the soil* (Gen. 1:11–12, 30 18:2 33:3 Lev. 19:9); ④ and 'erats is found in miscellaneous phrases. Strong's #776 BDB #75 This first phrase I find more difficult to determine its meaning than I really expected. The translation is fairly straightforward. If we were speaking of the marvelous creative power of God or to the intricacies to which He had devoted Himself, no matter how closely we examine the earth, there is far more there than we could fully describe or understand. However, the context here is the arbitrariness of blessing and cursing, totally apart from merit. There was land which was blessed and land which was cursed; for years, an area might be blessed with rain, causing it to be lush and green; then for several years, it may suffer drought, its vegetation dying out to be replaced by bare land. There is no inherent right or wrong that we can associate with the land, even though, from our

²⁵ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 247.

standpoint, we can associate it with cursing and with blessing. God is not portrayed here as arbitrary, Himself, but the relationship between good and evil and cursing and blessing is not an issue which is fully settled here on this earth. And, in any case, no matter what we look to, God's hand is in it.

The second line begins with the wâw conjunction and the Piel imperfect of câphar (כָּפַר) [pronounced saw-FAHR], which means, in the Piel, *to recall, to recount, to declare*. Strong's #5608 BDB #707. The remainder of the verse reads: And declare to you fish of the sea (*fish* is the subject because it is the only noun which matches the verb; and this is the typical sentence order of the Hebrew: conjunction, verb, direction object and subject). Keil and Delitzsch: *All these living creatures, though without reason and speech, still utter a language which is heard by every intelligent man.*²⁶

This latter sentence is one which surprises me (at first). From the knowledge which I have of the deep, I know there is no blessing and cursing to be associated with that which is right and wrong. Apart from the reality that animals really operate outside the sphere of right and wrong, still, some animals suffer pain and some great blessing, and there is no careful correspondence between this and whatever moral character we can assign to them. I think that we have a greater appreciation and knowledge of the seas than did Job and his friends and we are able to attribute the idea of moral and immoral to some creatures of the sea . Job and his friends were ranchers and they probably had eaten fish on occasion and perhaps had even fished. However, to their observation, because it was superficial, they did not associate morality with the creatures of the sea; no more than they could associate morality to the land. And, since there is no real morality that can be assigned the fishes of the sea, then it makes the idea of cursing and blessing even more an anomaly. My thinking here is that, in the previous verse, we might ascribe to the animals on the earth and to the birds of the sky some sort of a morality, which is often completely removed from the fates which befalls them; when it comes to the earth and the fishes of the seas, that which is amoral, there still can be ascribed cursing and blessing. So, Job's point is that you cannot immediately associate God's blessing with that which is right and moral; and cursing does not automatically follow that which is wrong and immoral. This realization does not require a PhD in theology—even nature tells you that.

**"Who does not know among all of these
that the hand of Y^ehowah has done this?"**

Job 12:9

**"Who does not know among all of these
that Y^ehowah's hand has done this?"**

I first dealt with this verse without covering the other translations, but in examining Keil and Delitzsch, I can see that an improper translation can cause one to be misled.

The Emphasized Bible

Who knoweth not among all these, That the hand of Yahweh hath done this?

Keil and Delitzsch

Who would not recognize in all this That the hand of Jehovah hath wrought this,...

NASB

"Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this,...

Young's Lit. Translation Who hath not known in all these, That the hand of Jehovah hath done this?

Because Rotherham, Young and Owen all agreed, I thought it unnecessary at first to go into the various translations; however, Keil and Delitzsch revealed a different take on this verse and if you happen to be reading through Keil and Delitzsch, who are generally very accurate, and you come across this, it might give you pause. It sounds as though the translations mean essentially the same thing; however, the interrogative *who* is associated with the phrase *among all these* (or, *in all these*), referring to the witnesses cited in the previous verses; the translation *in all this* is incorrect. The primary problem is the collective plural of the demonstrative adjective 'êllel (אֶלְלֶה) [pronounced EEHL-leh], which means *these, these things*. *These things* can refer to what has preceded (Gen. 9:19 10:20, 31) or to what follows (Gen. 6:9 10:1). Strong's #428 (verb is #422) BDB #41. The final demonstrative adjective is the feminine singular of *zeh* (זֶה) [pronounced zeh] which means *here, this*. Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260. Now let's put the verses together, to get a flow of thought: "Indeed, ask please the animals and one of them will inform you; and the bird of the heavens and he will make it pitifully obvious to you; or communicate to the earth and it will inform you, and fish of the sea declare it to you. Who does not know among all of these that the hand of Y^ehowah has done this, in whose hand is the soul of all of life and breath [or, spirit] of

²⁶ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 353.

all of flesh of man?" The primary meaning is that even the dumb animals recognize that it is the hand of God which has done all of this. Secondarily, we may then infer, from the nature of poetry, that we can look to these things for proofs of God's hand in everything. The latter is more a matter of interpretation and the former is what the verse out and out says. Keil and Delitzsch: *The working of God, which infinitely transcends human power and knowledge, is the sermon which is continuously preached by all created things; they all proclaim the omnipotence and wisdom of the Creator...All these creatures, though without reason and speech, still utter a language which is heard by every intelligent man...they do not even possess knowledge, but they offer instruction.*²⁷ In the incredible complexity of life and even that which is not life, we see the creative hand of God. From this we may theologically infer that all that is done is with His permission. Now, this, in my own present state of mind, is difficult. We live in a world of pain and suffering; and although I personally have been very lucky and very blessed and the suffering which I have endured seems so meager compared to that of others, when I look around me, the evil and suffering and sadness make me question God at some level. This is a weakness on my part to which I admit. Job, a far greater man and much stronger than I would be under similar circumstances, understands and agrees that God's hand is in all that is, which includes the pain and suffering. I suspect that few believers will fully appreciate the importance and absolute necessity of what life has until we are in eternity.

Barnes: *Who cannot see in all these the proofs of the same divine and sovereign agency? Who cannot see the hand of the same God and the same great principles of administration? The meaning of Job is, that the Eliphaz position which he defends is so plain, that it may be learned from the very earth and the lowest orders of animals which God has made.*²⁸

Job's associates have made it seem as though they have consulted the great wisdom of the past, have taken from the current thinking and they have even had visions which have told them that God is responsible for what has happened to Job. Job's response here is, "Well, duh." The fish, the animals the birds—they all know that what has occurred is from the hand of God. And, so there is no confusion that some pagan god is not under consideration, Job uses the name of God—Yehowah. "It does not take a rocket scientist to understand that my fate and circumstances are the result of the hand of God." Job does not disagree with that; he makes clear the point that blessing does not automatically follow good nor cursing evil.

Job's observation may seem fairly basic, but it isn't. His friends have accused him repeatedly, both of being the cause of his troubles (and hence, disciplined by God) and of not going to God for forgiveness. So they assume that Job does not realize that God is involved here. However, Job is fully cognizant of that. He does not understand what exactly is going on, but he understands that it is God's hand. If we happened to see the words, "Gail, Tim luvs u" in spray paint on the side of a dippy dumpster, we have no problem recognizing that this is man's handiwork. No one would for a moment consider that a can of spray paint exploded in the heat and just happened to make a pattern which resembled those words. When archeologists go digging and they find these very primitive tools; most of the time, they can look at the most primitive of tools and recognize that it was the result of someone's intelligence and design. On the other hand, they can view a world which is much more complex than one could ever imagine and assume it just happened purely by chance. The smallest living creature, the amoeba, can be studied and an encyclopedia of information could be recorded about this animal; yet man assumes that he was the result of some proteins and chemicals which just got mixed together in a soup and from that mixture magically appeared a living thing more complex than you or I could understand. We are quick to recognize man's handiwork, no matter how primitive it is, but we lack the common sense to recognize God's. **The heavens continually speak of the glory of God and their expanse declares the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech and night to night reveals knowledge** (Psalm 19:1–2). The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. Y^ehowah has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together, they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 14:1–3).

²⁷ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, pp. 352–353.

²⁸ Barnes' Notes, *Job, Volume 1*; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 248.

An interesting point: the Name Y^ehowah does not occur very often in the book of Job. It occurred several times in the narrative portion of Job (the first two chapters), and it will be found again in the final chapters in the narrative portion only, but His Name is found nowhere else in the poetic portions of Job. The only possible exception to this is Job 28:28, where Y^ehowah is found in some manuscripts, although Adonai is found in all of the extant the printed editions (as of the writing of Barnes, which goes back to 1847). Even here, in Job 12:9, there are several printed editions where the Name Y^ehowah is lacking.

One of the evidences of the antiquity of Job is that the name of God is only found here in the entire poetical sections of Job. The contention is that this must have been composed by an Israelite much later; hence the use of the name Y^ehowah in the prologue. The thinking is that the name Y^ehowah is specifically a name between God and Israel. This is a falacious argument based upon a misinterpretation of Ex. 6:3 (which we will deal with in detail when we get there). Furthermore, the name Y^ehowah is found throughout the Old Testament prior to Israel (e.g., Gen. 2:7–9, 15, 16, 18, 19 3:(12:1, 4, 7, 8 13:10, 13).²⁹ What is interesting is that some authors will entertain a proof like this and ignore the fact that Israel and all that has to do with Israel is never mentioned throughout the entirety of the book of Job.

There has been a lot made out of God's Name, much of it foolishness. The Jews took it to be so holy, that they no longer used it. Now, to some extent, that is how it should be. Television has trivialized God's Name with the continual use of the phrase *Oh my God*, to which we are over-exposed. Where it is absolutely true that we should not trivialize the Name of God, that does not mean that we should never use it. The Israelites went overboard on legalism, and this is one area in which they did. The care taken by the Israelites to never speak God's name, Y^ehowah, is excessive. In order to avoid speaking God's name, rather than say it in public readings, they read in *Adonai* instead of *Y^ehowah*, so that we lost the correct way to pronounce *Y^ehowah*. What we know of the pronunciation of the ancient Hebrew has been preserved through the public readings of Scripture for thousands of years, as the recorded language had no vowels. So, since they never pronounced the name of *Y^ehowah* in public for thousands of years, but, instead, *Adonai*, we no longer are certain as to the pronunciation of *Y^ehowah*. All we have today are the vowels YHWH. And, although I think that what I have suggested is quite reasonable and likely accurate, there is a certain poetry in *Jehovah* as well. This is the pronunciation that we get by taking the English equivalents of the Hebrew consonants (there is no *J* in Hebrew; we often transliterate their *j* as a *y*); then we insert the vowels from the word *Adonai*. To my way of thinking, this would have been a marvelously clever way to preserve the pronunciation of the name of God—use a name with the same vowel points, knowing that the lack of vowels will someday obscure the real pronunciation of His Name.

The Jehovah's Witnesses made a ridiculous claim that they were the only group to recognize the importance of God's name, *Jehovah*. What their lack of objective scholarship failed to unearth was that their pronunciation was faulty from the beginning, as there is no *j* in the Hebrew language. That means that they mispronounced the Holy Name of God which they were so proud in restoring.

The key to God's Name, and the reason which God allowed its true pronunciation to be lost in history is that He would later be known by His own by another name. *For a child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest upon His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness. From then on and forevermore, the zeal of Y^ehowah of the armies will accomplish this* (Isaiah 9:6–7). *And the angel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace with God. And, observe, you will conceive in your womb, and you will bear a son, and you will call Him Jesus. He will be great, and He will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His kingdom will have no end."* (Luke 1:30–33). An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; and she will bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Behold, the virgin will be with child and she shall bear a Son and they will call His name Immanuel," which,

²⁹ A tip of the hat to Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. xiv and p. 248.

translated means, “God with us.” And Joseph arose from his sleep, and he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and he took her as his wife and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son, and he called His name Jesus (Matt. 1:20b–25). Therefore, Jesus and Paul never emphasized the use of the name *Y^ehowah*, as Jesus is God, with Whom we have to do. **Therefore, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed upon Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philip. 2:9–10).**

**“Which in His hand [is the] soul of all of life
and breath [or, spirit] of all of flesh of man.**

Job 12:10

**“And in Whose hand is the life of all living
things
and the breath of all the flesh of man.**

Perhaps this verse was the inspiration for Paul, when, standing on Mars Hill, he said, **“For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’”** (Acts 17:28). **“The Breath of God has made me and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”** (Job 33:4). This is the difference between the nonliving and the living, whether it be a single celled animal or the body of a man—it is the breath of God; from His hand is the soul—the life—of all that lives.

Barnes: *The idea is that all are under the control of God. He gives life, and health, and happiness when he pleases and when he chooses he takes them away. His sovereignty is manifested, says Job, in the inferior creation, or among the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of heaven....man is subjected to the same laws as the rest of the creation. God is a sovereign, and the same great principles of administrations may be seen in all his works.³⁰* The point is that we see the principles that reward is not necessarily an outcome of goodness, nor is punishment always a direct result of evil in the animal kingdom; and since God is the source of life for them as He is for us, then it follows that the same principles apply.

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True Wisdom is with God

In the previous several verses, Job tells his friends that he is quite aware that God’s hand is involved in his desperate situation. Job has claimed that all of God’s creatures speak to His involvement in this world. That is, Job was not a deist—one who believes that God set this world in motion and then walked away from it. In the next few verses, Job will deal with some of what Bildad has said. Bildad has deferred to the ancients; he has made mention of the wise men of God. Job does not disagree, but he will tell his associates that one still will test the sayings and the viewpoints one is presented with—certainly, men of age are often wise and sagacious, but true knowledge is with God and we are to test even the wisdom of the sage.

**“Does not an ear scrutinize words
and a palate food tastes of it.**

Job 12:11

**“Don’t you think that I scrutinize what you
say
just as a palate tastes food?**

The actual order of the Hebrew is: **“Not does an ear words scrutinize? And a palate food tastes of it?”** The first verb is the Qal imperfect of bâchan (בָּחַן) [pronounced baw-KHAHN], which it means *to examine, to [carefully] scrutinize, to test.* Strong’s #974 BDB #103. Barnes: ...this...is evidently a proverbial expression...that it is the office of the ear to mark the distinction of sounds, and to convey the sense to the soul.³¹ Job is saying, “Don’t you actually hear what it is you are saying? Don’t you think that I am listening carefully to you?” It involves both parties here, both the one speaking and the one being spoken to.

³⁰ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 248.

³¹ Barnes’ Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 248.

In the second line, I am using the lamed preposition in the same way that it is found in the introduction to most Psalms—it is occasionally rendered of. The NASB suggests instead, *tastes for itself*. The tasting of the palate refers to some intelligent discretion; just as a palate tastes food, an intelligent mind actually weighs arguments and considers the reasoning involved. *The sense is, man is endowed with the faculty of distinguishing what is wholesome from what is unwholesome, and he should, in like manner, exercise the faculty which God has given him of distinguishing the true from the false on moral subjects...He should not suppose that merely to string together proverbs and to utter common-place suggestions, was a mark of true wisdom. He should separate the valuable from the worthless, the true from the false, and the wholesome from the injurious. Job complains that his friends had not done this. They had shown no power of discrimination or selection. They had uttered common place apothegums, and they gathered adages of former times, without any discrimination, and had urged them in their arguments against him, whether pertinent or not. It was by this kind of irrelevant and miscellaneous remark that he felt that he had been mocked by his friends.*³²

Elihu will later use the same expression: “**For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food.**” (Job 34:3). This is because Job had weighed and thought about this remark and was able to grasp its significance. Therefore, Job would hear what Elihu was saying and he would get it.

“In aged ones [is] wisdom
and [in] length of days understanding;

“There is wisdom in aged ones
and there is understanding in length of days;

Job 12:12

The word for *aged ones* is yâshîysh (שָׁיַשׁ) [pronounced yaw-SHEESH], which combines both age and wisdom. Barnes points out that this refers to one with gray hair, that it is a poetical word chiefly, and used for one who is decrepit with age (see Job 29:8 15:10 32:6 II Chron. 36:17). Strong's #3453 BDB #450. Job is an older man and he is wise because of his age. And because he is older and wiser, he actually thinks about what is being said; he is actually able to discern the correct from the false. The NIV Study Bible sees this as sarcasm—Job is chiding his compatriots for being elders, yet not having any real wisdom. Although Job certainly opened the door to sarcasm in his opening remarks, he is not really being sarcastic here. He is more stating a principle and implying that his friends are lacking, as they are older, yet they lack wisdom. Barnes: *This was in accordance with the ancient Oriental views, where knowledge was imparted mainly by tradition, and where wisdom depended much on the opportunity of personal observation.*³³ That idea is built into our very own constitution. Those in the Supreme Court are generally men who are of age and have seen trends and generations come and go. They, in a sense, have a final say in the interpretation of law. In theory, this sounds great; however, what many of the courts have done have gone back and taken principles from the Constitution and have applied them in ways that the founding fathers would never have applied them. One which we have seen particularly abused is the separation of church and state. Our country was founded by men who were 97% Protestant. That means that perhaps as many as 80% of the men who founded the United States were believers in Jesus Christ. What they did not want was a state-sponsored religion. Bible teaching was deemed necessary by many and commonly found in schools and in Universities. What they did not want is to be persecuted for their beliefs by something akin to the Church of England. God's name is found in the Bill of Rights and was a part of many of our mottos, pledges and songs. Our nation has enjoyed a tremendous prosperity and blessing due to our great spiritual heritage. This does not mean that the founders of our country were perfect, sinless men, devoid of self-will and indiscretion.

In the *Layman's Bible Commentary*, the writer pointed out that some reject vv. 7–12 as Job's words and some might reject this portion just because of the singleton use of God's name *Yehowah*. The thought is that it sounds more like Job's friends and this verse is said to be the capper. Kelly offers the idea that this verse is sarcastic and the section in view belongs in this passage. In context, Job is agreeing with much of what his friends have said. He does not disagree that nature and wisdom point toward the hand of God in his personal tragedies. Nor does he disparage the wisdom of elders (although he is probably the eldest one there). His argument is with their faulty application of what they know. V. 12 also acts as a setup for the next verse. Let me put those two together here:

³² Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 249.

³³ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 249.

"There is wisdom in aged ones and there is understanding in length of days; With Him (or, in His custody) is wisdom and might; and to Him, is counsel and understanding." (Job 12:12–13).

Because of this verse and the previous, it appears that a younger man, Elihu, has apparently joined the group at this time, but he does not speak; he simply listens. What is interesting is that Elihu uses many of Job's expressions to make a point with him. "I am young in years and you are old; therefore, I was shy and afraid to tell you what I think. I thought age should speak and increased years should teach wisdom. However, it is the spirit in man and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding. The abundant [in years] may not be wise and elders many not understand justice." (Job 32:6b–8). The reason that age is not an absolute with respect to wisdom, is that wisdom comes from God. "Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or has given understanding to the mind?" (Job 38:36). **For Y^ehowah gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding** (Prov. 2:6).

NIV Study Bible: *The theme of this section is stated in v. 13: God is sovereign in the created world, and especially in history. The rest of the poem dwells on the negative aspects of God's power and wisdom—e.g., the destructive forces of nature (vv. 14–15), how judges become fools (v. 17), how priests become humiliated (v. 19), how trusted advisors are silenced and elders deprived of good sense (v. 20). Contrast the claim of Eliphaz that God always uses his power in ways that make sense (5:10–16).*³⁴

**"With Him wisdom and might;
to Him, counsel and understanding.**

Job 12:13

**"With Him is wisdom and might;
and to Him, is counsel and understanding.**

We have an interesting use of words here. Job does not use God's name in this verse or in the subsequent verses. There was something in the way that he said this, the way that he looked off into space, or a chance in vocal inflection which let his compatriots know that he was now speaking of God and not of aged men (which was masculine plural anyway). In the Hebrew, we begin each line with a preposition and a pronomial suffix, making the pronoun emphatic. Even though we have a change in the direction of Job's soliloquy, he goes from the wisdom of man (which, in the case of his friends, is non-existent), and goes to the wisdom of God. The quote which I gave from Elihu is even more pertinent here. *Aged ones* from the previous verse is in the plural; *He*, in this verse, is in the singular. Using the word *aged ones*, Job is referring to himself. However, when using the suffix *He*, Job now refers to God (which goes back to vv. 9–10). Again, Elihu uses Job's words against him: "**Observe that God is mighty but He does not despise. He is mighty in strength of understanding.**" (Job 36:5). What Job is saying is not inaccurate, and Elihu's frequent borrowing from what Job is saying lends credence to the words of Job—that is, what Job is saying is accurate.³⁵ We have found the full embodiment of God's wisdom in His Son: **Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than man** (I Cor. 1:24b–25). **Who has directed the Spirit of Y^ehowah or, as His counselor, has caused Him to learn? Who has consulted with Him and who has given Him understanding? And who taught Him in the way of integrity and who has taught Him knowledge; and who has informed Him of the way of understanding?** (Isa. 40:13–14).

Barnes: *However much wisdom there may seem to be with aged men, yet the true wisdom—that which was supreme and worthy of the name—was to be found in God alone. The object of Job was to lead the thoughts up to god, and to bring his friends to a contemplation of the wisdom which he manifests in his works. Accordingly he goes on in the remainder of this chapter to state some of the illustrations of wisdom and power which God had exhibited, and particularly to show that he was a sovereign, and did his pleasure everywhere. He made all things; he sustains all things; he reverses the condition of men at his pleasure; he sets up whom he pleases, and when he chooses he casts them down. How works are contrary in many respects to what we should anticipate; and the sense of all is, that god was a holy and a righteous sovereign, and that such were the reverses under his administration that we could not argue that he treated all according to their character on earth.*³⁶

³⁴ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995; p. 738.

³⁵ Again, one of the problems of the book of Job, since it is the conversation of five men, is when do we have divine truth being revealed and when are we reading only the philosophy of man?

³⁶ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 249.

As a side note, notice how varied Job's sentences are. Sometimes he uses the wâw conjunction to split the lines; sometimes they are used within a line; some of his sentences are classical Hebrew construction and others are totally lacking in verbs, as is this one.

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God's Sovereignty

**"If He tears down and one cannot [re-] build;
[and if] He shuts in against a man, one
cannot open.** Job 12:14

**"If He tears down then none can rebuild;
and if He imprisons a man, then none can
free this man.**

This verse begins with the hypothetical particle *if* and the Qal imperfect of hâraç (וְרָאַץ) [pronounced *haw-RAHS*], which means *to throw down, to break or tear down, to overthrow*. Strong's #2040 BDB #248. This is followed by the wâw conjunction, the negative and the third person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect of the very famous bânâh (בָּנָה) [pronounced *baw-NAWH*], which means *to build*. Strong's #1129 BDB #124. It appears as though this is most properly rendered "...and one [or it] cannot be built" rather than "...and none can rebuild"; although the latter is easier on those who speak English. The hypothetical particle and the intervening conjunction acts like the English *if...then*.

"For You have made a city into a heap, a fortified city into a ruin, a palace of strangers is a city no more—it will never be rebuilt." (Isa. 25:2). Unless Y^ehowah builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless Y^ehowah guards the city, the police function in vain (Psalm 127:1). To, Tyre, one of the great cities of the ancient world, God said, "And I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I, Y^ehowah, have spoken." (Ezek. 26:14). "And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write, 'He Who is holy, Who is true, Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one will shut; and Who shuts and no one opens, says this:'" (Rev. 3:7). Barnes: *None can repair what he pulls down. Cities and towns he can devote to ruin by fire, or earthquake, or the pestilence, and so completely destroy them that they can never be rebuilt. We may now refer to such illustrations as Sodom, Babylon, Petra, Tyre, Herculaneum, and Pompeii, as full proof of what is here affirmed.*³⁷

The second line has the Qal imperfect of çâgar (צָגַר) [pronounced *saw-GAHR*], which means *to shut up, to close up; possibly to deliver over in order to imprison*. Rotherham gives this as literally, *He closeth in upon a man*, which is figurative for imprisonment. Strong's #5462 BDB #688. This is followed by the Hebrew word for *man*. What keeps us from thinking that *man* is the subject is the preposition 'al (עַל) [pronounced *al*], which means, *upon, against, above*. Strong's #5920, 5921 BDB #752. My own feeling is that the use of 'al is more grammatical than meaningful; that is, it is used to show that *man* is not the subject, although it is not needed for additional clarification of meaning.

What Job has stated is not something new, but in total agreement with Zophar, who said, "If He [quickly] passes through and He delivers over and He assembles; and who can cause Him to reconsider?" (Job 11:10). "Observe, the Lord has a strong and mighty One, as a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction, like a storm of mighty overflowing waters, He has cast it down to the earth with His hand." (Isa. 28:2). "He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone; and He has uprooted my hope like a tree." (Job 19:10). Barnes: *He can shut up a man in such difficulties and straits that he cannot extricate himself...God has complete control over a man, and that he can so hedge up his way that he cannot help himself.*³⁸

³⁷ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; pp. 249–250.

³⁸ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 250.

**"If he holds in the waters and they dry up;
and if he sends them out and they overturn
[the] land.** Job 12:15

**"If he holds in the waters, the land dries up;
and if he gives an overabundance of rain,
the waters will overwhelm the land.**

The first verb in this verse is the Qal imperfect of 'âtsar (אָצַר) [pronounced aw-TZAHR ro gaw-TZAHR], which means *to restrain, to refrain, to shut, to surround, to enclose, to hold back, to restrain by rule*. Strong's #6113 BDB #783. The word *waters* is preceded by the preposition *in*. "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You so afflict them." (I Kings 8:35). Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "By the life of Y^howah, the God of Israel, before Whom I stand, thre will surely not be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." (I Kings 17:1). "Beware, so that your hearts are not deceived and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them, or the anger of Y^howah will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which Y^howah is giving you." (Deut. 11:17).

The other option is covered in the second line, which begins with the Piel imperfect of shâlach (נֶלְשָׁךְ) [pronounced shaw-LAKH] which means simply *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to send to inquire, to commission, to send out on a mission* and even *to let go, to set free*. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018.

The final verb is the Qal imperfect of hâphak^e (הַפְּקֵד) [pronounced haw-FAHK^e], which has a plethora of meanings; in the Qal, it can mean ① *to turn, to turn oneself* (I Kings 22:34 Judges 20:39); ② *to overturn, to overthrow* (Gen. 19:21 Amos 4:11); ③ *to turn, to convert, to change* (Psalm 105:25) and when followed by lamed, it means *turned into something* (Lev. 13:3); ④ *to pervert* (as in someone's words—Jer. 23:36), *to be perverse* (Isa. 29:16). Strong's #2015 BDB #245. In the 600th year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened, and the rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights." (Gen. 7:11–12).

Barnes: *He has control over the rains and the fountains; and when these are withheld, rivers and lakes become dry...it is remarkable that in the argument here there is no allusion to any historical fact, not to the floor, or to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or to the passage through the Red Sea, though these occurrences would have furnished so appropriate illustrations of the points under discussion. Is it to be inferred that Job had never heard of any of those events? Or may it have been that the lessons which they were adapted to teach had been actually embodied in the proverbs he was using, and furnished well known illustrations or the basis of such apothegms?*³⁹ My own thoughts is that this occurred prior to these events, other than the flood. However, wouldn't that be wild if Job was antediluvian?

**"With Him [is] strength and sound wisdom;
to Him one going astray and [the one]
misleading.** Job 12:16

**"With Him is strength and sound wisdom;
the one going astray and the one who
misleads are His.**

The second line is difficult. It begins with the prepositional phrase *to Him, for Him, in regards to Him*. The next word is the Qal active participle of shâgag (שָׁגָג) [pronounced shaw-GAHG], which means ① *to wander, to go astray* (Ezek. 34:6); ② *to reel, to become intoxicated* (Prov. 5:14 20:1); ③ *to err, to transgress inadvertently* (I Sam. 26:21). Strong's #7683 BDB #992. The last word is the Hiphil participle of shâgâh (שָׁגָה) [pronounced shaw-GAWH], which means *to err, to go astray, commit a sin unknowingly*. In the Hiphil, it means *to lead astray, to mislead*. Strong's #7686 BDB #993. Many translators retain that play on words by rendering the second line as: "The misled and the misleader belong to Him." (NASB). "The deceived and the deceiver are His." (NKJV).

Barnes: *All classes of people are under His control. All are dependent on him. He has power to keep them, and he can destroy them when he pleases. Dr. Good supposes that Job refers here to himself and his friends who*

³⁹ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 250.

have beguiled him into expressions of impatience and complaints. But it is more probably a general declaration that all classes of men were under the control of God.⁴⁰ For there is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:11).

**"Leading counselors [as] spoil;
and judges, He makes fools.**

Job 12:17

**"Leading away counselors as plunder;
and judges, He makes fools.**

Let's first see what others have done:

The Amplified Bible

He leads [great and scheming] counselors away stripped and barefoot, and makes the judges fools [in human estimation, by over throwing their plans].

The Emphasized Bible

Who leadeth away counselors [as] a spoil, And judges He befooleth:

NASB

"He makes counselors walk barefoot [or, stripped], And makes fools of judges."

The Septuagint

He leads counselors away captive, and maddens the judges of the earth.

Young's Lit. Translation

Causing counselors to go away a spoil, And judges He maketh foolish.

The first word is the Hipil participle of hâlak^e (הַלָּק) [pronounced *haw-LAHK*], which means *to go, to come, to walk*. In the Hiphil, it means *to lead*. Strong's #1980 (and 3212) BDB #229. The adjective used to describe the counselor is shôlâl (שׁוֹלֵל) [pronounced *show-LAWL*], which is rendered *stripped, barefoot, spoil*. According to Keil and Delitzsch, this means stripped of their clothes with violence (Isa. 20:4), and stripped, in particular, of their insignia of power. God leads them half-naked into captivity. God destroys not just their power but their prestige.⁴¹ Strong's #7758 BDB #1021. This is directly related to the verb and noun which refer to the taking of spoil and plunder, which can include humans as well as animals and wealth. The war counsel—those who advise the king as to how to proceed in a war—they are taken away as captives and as the spoils of war. We have a prophecy concerning that in Isa. 20:4: **So the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.** Barnes: *That is, the counsels of wise and great men do not avail against God. Statesmen, who promised themselves victory as the result of their plans he disappoints, and leads away into captivity. The object of this is to show that God is superior over all, and also that men are not dealt with in exact accordance with their character and rank. God is a sovereign, and he shows his sovereignty when defeating the counsels and purposes of the wisest of men, and overturning the plans of the mighty.*⁴²

Judges, those who have their positions due to their wisdom, God makes them appear foolish by comparison. **Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** (I Cor. 1:20). The idea here is that God has control over all mankind, regardless of their station in life and God is superior over all mankind. Barnes: *He leaves [judges] to distracted and foolish plans. He leaves them to the adoption of measures which result in their own ruin. He is a sovereign, having control over the minds of the great, and power to defeat all their counsels, and to render them infatuated. Nothing can be clearer than this. Nothing has been more frequently illustrated in the history of nations.*⁴³ In our country, most people who have observed politics enough have seen judges and legislators make decisions and pass laws that, even when conceived and passed in sincerity, have many more ill effects than good. Our constitution, which is one of the most wonderful documents of history, has been distorted and confused by present-day lawmakers. Our system of justice has become a joke. No longer is it a case of the guilty are punished. Because of various rulings by judges, it is possible for a person to be undeniably guilty of a crime and to be able to walk free. It is possible for a person mildly inconvenienced, often by their own stupidity, and then to be able to legally steal money from a corporation or business in a lawsuit. We can rest assured than in the future, there will be a final justice, and that all that is owed, is paid, and that all sin will be punished. There will be justice in God's court. **But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men** (I Peter 3:7). **Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day**

⁴⁰ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 250.

⁴¹ Keil & Delitzsch's Commentary on the Old Testament; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 355.

⁴² Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 250.

⁴³ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 250.

of wrath and disclosure of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his deeds (Rom. 2:5–6 Psalm 62:12). And every unbeliever who admires Jesus Christ as a good man, must keep in mind that the loving Jesus said, “Then He [God the Father] will say to those on His left hand, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’” (Matt. 25:41).

**“Bonds of kings He loosens
then He binds a waistcloth against their
loins.**

Job 12:18 **“He removes shackles put on by kings
then He binds the kings in common clothing.**

The reference here is not a restraint which has been applied to a king but imprisoning chains that a king has applied to a captive, a criminal or to one who disagrees with him. God removes those restraints and then God places the king in common clothing. O Y^ehowah, because I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid and You have loosened my bonds (Psalm 116:16). Thus says Y^ehowah, “Though they are at full strength and likewise many, even so, they will be cut off and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer. So Now, I will break his yoke bar from you and I will tear off your shackles.” (Nahum 1:12–13).

In the second line, we have the Qal imperfect of `âçar (אָכַר) [pronounced aw-AWHR], which means *to bind, to tie, to imprison, to restrain*. Strong's #631 BDB #63. What these kings are placed into is a `êzôr (אֵזֶר) [pronounced â-ZOHR], and one calls it a slave's garment. It is possible that it meant that early on, as this is not found again until the prophets (and 1 Kings 1:8), but because it is related to the verb *to gird, to clothe*, this would be a simpler garment, generally not associated with kings. Strong's #232 BDB #25. What we have here is a bit of a play on words. A king is not *bound, imprisoned* per se, by the clothing; it represents a removal from his station in life and it is simply expressed poetically. Barnes: *The whole series of remarks here refers to the reverses and changes in the conditions of life. The meaning here is, that the bonds of authority which they imposed on others are unbound, and that their own loins are bound with a girdle, not a girdle of royal dignity and ornament, but such a one as they are bound with who are servants, or who travel.*⁴⁴ *He pours contempt upon nobles and He makes them wander in a pathless waste* (Psalm 107:40).

**“Leading priests [as] spoil
and the well-established He overturns.**

Job 12:19

**“He leads away priests as spoil
and He overturns those who are well-
established.**

V. 19 begins exactly the same way as v. 17, but with a different object. Here, we have mention of one of the oldest professions of man—the office of a priest. The noun is kôhêñ (כהן) [pronounced koh-HANE], and this is a man who represents man to God. He intercedes between man and God. He stands before God in front of man. We find this word used as early as Gen. 14:18. Strong's #3548 BDB #463. Barnes affirms that several have interpreted this word as *statesmen*, or some such similar nonsense, and then writes: *But it seems to me that it is to be taken in its usual signification, and that it means that even the ministers of religion were at the control of God, and were subject to the same reverses as other men of distinction and power.*⁴⁵ Personally, I can't see how one would want to interpret this in any other way.

Like any holy office, we are dealing here with the distortion of the priesthood. Just as we have pastors and evangelists of today who are evil and are under the employ of Satan, so we have priests in those days, who, claimed to intercede between man and God, but who were in bonds to Satanic authority. Today, all those belonging to a specialized priesthood are in bondage to Satan, as there is no priesthood as we had in the Old Testament. The priesthood today is the universal priesthood of all believers. We are all able now to represent ourselves before God. We can all go boldly before the throne of grace without the intermediary of a human priest. The Old Testament priest was a symbol or a shadow of what was to come—they stood in the gap, representing our Lord Jesus Christ; however, once the perfect had arrived on the scene, the imperfect passed away. Ignorance of this

⁴⁴ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 251. Barnes mentions that this came from the *Pictoral Bible*.

⁴⁵ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 251.

last fact is a cause for cultism and confusion throughout the Christian community. We have people awaiting communication by God, either by dreams, by a voice, or by some supernatural method, not recognizing that we have the full revelation of God in writing. We have people who portray themselves as specialized priests, not knowing that we now have a High Priest to Whom we can turn. In the early days of Christianity, we had believers offering animal sacrifices, going back to the shadows even though they possessed the reality. We do not return to the shadows once we have obtained the reality. *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect [or, the completed thing] arrives on the scene, the partial will be done away with* (I cor. 13:9–10). Now, if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity, there takes place a change of law also. For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And this is clearer still, if another (of a different type of) priest arises according to the similarity of Melchizedek, who had become one not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed, “*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*” For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness, because the Law made nothing perfect, and on the other hand, there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, “*The Lord has sworn and He will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’*”); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. And the priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him. He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was right that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever. Now, the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord put together, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; hence, it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law, who serve as a copy and as a shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God, when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See, “he says, “That you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you in the mountain.” But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For finding fault with them, He says, “*Observe, days will come, says the Lord, when I will effect a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers*”...When He said, “*A new covenant*”, He had made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is near disappearance. (Heb. 7:11–8:9a, 13 Psalm 110:4 Ex. 25:40 Jer. 31:31–32).

The priests alluded to here, the ones being led away barefoot, are those who have gone apostate. The idea here is that the nation has gone apostate, and their spiritual leaders go that route first. We cannot lose sight of the fact that those in greatest opposition to the ministry of our Lord were the priests and other religious types. What God promises Israel was: “*Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and its kings, its princes, to make them a ruin, a horror, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day.*” (Jer. 25:18).

The second class of people that Job deals with are described by the masculine plural adjective ‘êthân (יְתָן) [pronounced â-thawn], and it means *perennial, ever-flowing, permanent, constant*. This is a word used primarily of water; however, in reference to a nation or a person, this is one which has been around for a long time in a position of importance; therefore, we will go with *well-established*. Strong's #386 (388) BDB #450.

The verb here is the Piel imperfect of qâlaph (קַלֵּף) [pronounced saw-LAHF], which means *to pervert, to overturn, to turn upsidedown*. Gesenius explains that the primary force of the root of this word is *slipperiness, gliding away, escaping*; therefore, he gives the meaning *to cause to slip, to cause to fail, to give to destruction, to make slippery.*

Strong's #5557 BDB #701. In this context, we will render it *overturn*. Again, Job is acknowledging that God is completely in charge. As Daniel said, "It is He Who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding." (Dan. 2:21).

**"Removing speech with regards to the entrusted ones
and discernment of elders He removes.**

Job 12:20

**"He takes away the speech from those who
are trusted speakers;
and He removes the discernment of elders.**

The first verb here is the Hiphil participle of çûwr (צָוַר) [pronounced soor] which means, in the Hiphil, *to cause to depart, to remove, to take away*. Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693. What God removes is the feminine singular substantive of sâphâh (שָׁפָח) [pronounced saw-FAWH] which means *lip, speech, edge*. It actually has two related, but different meanings: ❶ a person's lip or lips, including that which emanates therefrom; therefore, it means *lip, speech, words, tongue, dialect, language*; and ❷ it can refer to the *lip, edge, border* of a vessel, a garment, of a river, sea or land. Strong's #8193 BDB #973.

This is followed by the lamed preposition and the masculine plural, Niphal participle of 'âman (אָמַן) [pronounced aw-MAHN], which means *confirmed, faithful, certain, lasting, steadfast, dependable, trustworthy, entrusted, reliable*. Strong's #539 BDB #52. Barnes: *He takes away the power of giving safe counsel or good advice. The trusty or "faithful" here refer to those of age and experience, and on whose counsel men are accustomed to rely. The meaning here is, that their most sagacious anticipations are disappointed, their wisest schemes are foiled. The fail in their calculations of the course of events, and the arraignments of Providence are such that they could not anticipate what was to occur.*⁴⁶

The verb in the second line is the Qal imperfect of lâqach (לְקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH], which means *to take, to take from, to take in marriage, to seize*. Strong's #3947 BDB #542. What God takes is ṭa'am (טָעֵם) [pronounced TAH-ahm or TAH-gahm] which means both *taste* (Ex. 16:31 Num. 11:8) and *discretion* (Psalm 119:66 Prov. 11:22). Strong's #2940 BDB #381. Barnes: *To whom the young were accustomed to look up with deference and respect. The meaning here is, that they who were accustomed to give wise and sound advice, if left by God, give vain and foolish counsels.*⁴⁷

**"Pouring contempt upon noble ones
and a restraint [or, belt or bond] of [the]
strong [or, streams] He casts down.**

Job 12:21

**"Pouring contempt upon nobility
and He casts down the restraints applied by
the strong.**

What God pours contempt upon is the masculine plural of the adjective nâdîy^bv (נָדִיָּב) [pronounced naw-DEE^BV], which means ❶ *voluntary, willing, spontaneous, ready* (Ex. 35:5, 22 II Chron. 28:21 Psalm 51:14); ❷ *giving spontaneously and liberally* (Prov. 19:6); ❸ *generous, noble* (which, in the Oriental mind, is closely connected to the concepts of giving and liberality, and is a reference to character) (Isa. 32:5, 8 Prov. 17:7); ❹ *nobility of race or station* and therefore, often translated *prince(s)* (Job 34:18 Psalm 107:40 113:8). This has a synonym, nâgîyd^b(נָגִיד) [pronounced naw-GEED], whose meaning is the same, but proceeds in the opposite order. This word comes from the original concept of a leader and ruler and then is applied to the virtues which become a prince.⁴⁸ Strong's #5081 BDB #622. Elihu, who speaks the truth in the book of Job, will say: "*The nobles may not be wise nor may elders understand justice.*" (Job 32:9). We have an example of this in the extreme in Dan. 4:33–34: "*Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his head had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. But at the end of that period, I Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and I praised and honored Him Who lives forever.*" We also find in the

⁴⁶ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 251.

⁴⁷ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 251.

⁴⁸ This was taken almost directly from Geseius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament; H.W.F. Gesenius, translated by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, LL.D.; ©1979 by Baker Books, p. 535, whose organization is much better than BDB's.

Dan. 2:21: "And it is He Who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding." Job 34:19: "God shows no partiality to princes nor does He regard the rich over the poor, because they are all the work of His hands." Barnes: [God] has the power to hurl them from their thrones, and to overwhelm them with disgrace.⁴⁹

Although already quoted, it should be mentioned that we find Job 21a and 24b quoted verbatim in Psalm 107:40: Pouring contempt upon noble ones and He causes them to wander in a desolate [empty] area, no path [or, direction] [or, in a pathless waste].⁵⁰ The fact that we have such a quotation is not all that mysterious—it would mean that the Psalmist had read the book of Job and this was a place to insert in his own writing a taste of Job.

In the next line we have a word which occurs only here, but seems to be an alternate spelling of a very similar word found in Psalm 109:19 and Isa. 23:10.* It's meaning is disputed and rendered *strength, girdle, belt, yoke, bonds, restraints*. Strong's #4206 BDB #561. The next word is also ambiguous and has two possible readings; it could mean *streams or strong*. Contextually, it appears to mean either *the strength of the strong* or *the bonds of the strong*. The verb should help us here. It is the Piel perfect of râphâh (רָפַח) [pronounced raw-FAW], which means to *let down, to cast down, to let fall*. Strong's #7503 BDB #951. What Job is asserting is God's power over all, so I think we would be safe in allowing this to mean "Pouring contempt upon nobility and casting down the restraints applied by the strong."⁵¹

"Uncovering deep [and unsearchable] things out from extraordinary darkness then He brings to the light deep darkness [or, death-shadow]."

Job 12:22

"He uncovers deep and unsearchable things out from extraordinary darkness and He brings deep darkness [or, death-shadow] into the light."

If you will recall, at the end of Job's last talk, he was in a deep spiritual funk, giving us seven or so words for darkness and blackness which described his mood and his station in life. Zophar has made him mad, that he uses these words again, but in a different context.

The first verb is the Piel participle of gâlâh (גָלַה) [pronounced gaw-LAWH], which means *to uncover, to discover* in the Piel. Strong's #1540 BDB #162. Since we have had most of these words only recently, I have rendered them as we did before. It sounds as though Daniel had studied the book of Job; in Dan. 2:22, he wrote: "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with Him." Our Lord said to His disciples: "Therefore, do not fear them [who have authority over you]; for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be known." (Matt. 10:26). And Paul wrote to the Corinthians: Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes, Who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and He will disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God (I Cor. 4:5). Barnes: That is, God discloses truths which are wholly beyond the power of man to discover—truths that seem to be hidden in profound night...even from the most dark and impenetrable regions God could bring out light and truth. All is naked and open to the mind of God.⁵² Keil and Delitzsch: The meaning of v. 22 in this connection can only be, that there is nothing so finely spun out that God cannot make it visible. All secret plans of the wicked, all secrets ins, and the deeds fo the evil-doer though veiled in deep darkness, He bringeth before the tribunal of the world.⁵³

We completely take for granted what God has done on our behalf with regards to truth. We would know nothing of the spiritual struggle in which we are engaged, little of God's perfection and His grace; the plan of salvation is not something that man would think to make up. Much of what we know, we cannot see. We cannot see angels, we

⁴⁹ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 251.

⁵⁰ I would have not noticed this apart from The NIV Study Bible; ©1995; p. 739.

⁵¹ Barnes gives this an entirely different translation and therefore an entirely different meanings; this is found in Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 251.

⁵² Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 252.

⁵³ Keil & Delitzsch's Commentary on the Old Testament; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. IV, p. 356.

cannot see demons and we cannot see God; we cannot even see Jesus Christ. Generally, speaking, we cannot see the results of our spiritual life, and we certainly cannot see what our life will be like in eternity. Everything that we know of this unseen world is revealed to us in Scripture. Now, we certainly know that there is an unseen world because the most important aspect of our own personal lives is our souls—which nobody can see, not even ourselves. Now if the greater portion of our identity is unseen, then we recognize that the greater portion of those around us is also unseen. We can logically infer that there is an unseen world. However, its composition is unknown to us apart from the revelation of Scripture. All we know that is important and real has been revealed to us. Apart from the time that we are at work, we should devote a significant portion of our lives (my personal thinking is between 30 min to an hour and 30 minutes a day) studying the Word of God (I say apart from work because you should not be spending your time at work studying God's Word). Also, I don't mean studying as I do. I sit down with twenty translations, several Hebrew and Greek grammar books and as many Lexicons, and another hundred reference books and study until I am worn out, which is usually from 2-3 hours. This has never been a method of study designed for the typical believer. Nor is reading a spiritually inspiring book count; nor does—and you are going to hate this—reading your Bible. God has designed the local church to build up the saints. There are too many pastors who put off their job on the congregation. They are the ones who are to **study to show themselves approved unto God, a workman that is not ashamed**⁵⁴, and they are to communicate the results of their study to their congregation. This is how the typical believer grows. And it is because this is not understood that the church is so confused and has so little impact today. We have pastors who function as social coordinators, as counselors and who present a little message two or three times a week; and they place the burden of Bible study upon their congregation, who are not equipped to study the Bible. Now and again, after several years of careful study under a good pastor, a believer might be able to explore some topics in the Bible or to read a book and to get something out of it. However, the bulk of the growth should come from sitting in church (or, next to a tape recorder, radio or VCR) and receiving the message of the pastor in that way.

**"Causing to flourish with respect to the nations
and then He destroys them;
enlarging the nations
and then He leads them [into slavery].**

Job 12:23

**"Causing a nation to flourish
and then He destroys it;
enlarging the national boundaries
and then He leads them away into slavery.**

**"Leading astray with respect to the nations
and then He destroys them;
enlarging the nations
and then He leads them [into prosperity].**

Job 12:23
accurate
alternate

**"Leading a nation astray and then He
destroys it;
enlarging the borders of a nation and then
He leads it into prosperity.**

The interpretation of this verse is easy; there are some problems with the translation, so let's see what some others have done:

The Amplified Bible

He makes nations great, and He destroys them; He enlarges nations [and then straitens and shrinks them again], and leads them [away captive].

The Emphasized Bible

Who giveth greatness to nations, or destroys them, Who spreadeth out naions, or leadeth them into exile;

Keil and Delitzsch

He giveth prosperity to nations and then destroyeth them, Increase of territory to nations and then carrieth them away;

NAB

He makes nations great and he destroys them; he spreads peoples abroad and he abandons them.

NASB

He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.

NJB

He builds nations up, then ruins them, he makes peoples expand, then suppresses them.

NIV

He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperse them.

⁵⁴ II Tim. 2:15

Owen's Translation	He makes great [or, He leads astray] the nations and He destroys them. He enlarges nations and leads them away.
The Septuagint	Causing the nations to wander, and destroying them; overthrow in the nations, and leading them.
Young's Lit. Translation	Magnifying the nations, and He destroyeth them, Spreading out the nations, and He quieteth them.

We seem to have a parallelism in this verse, which helps us to properly render the first verb. It is the Hiphil participle of *sâgâ'* (*נָגַע*) [pronounced *saw-GAW*], which means *to multiply, to increase, to flourish, to cause to flourish*. Strong's #7679 BDB #960.

The second parallel line is the Qal active participle of *shâṭach* (*שָׁתַח*) [pronounced *shaw-TAHKH*], and it means *to spread, to spread abroad, to expand*. In this context, this means that God has caused a nation to extend its boundaries. Strong's #7849 BDB #1008. The second verb is the Hiphil imperfect of *nâchâh* (*נָחַה*) [pronounced *naw-KAHH*], which means *to lead, to guide*; I was expecting this to mean *to lead away into slavery*, however, that is not the case. It is *to lead into a path of blessing*. This verb either has a neutral meaning (Gen. 24:26 II Kings 18:11) or it is a very positive leading (Psalm 77:20 Prov. 11:3 Isa. 58:11). It is therefore unreasonable to suppose it means *to lead back to their former boundaries*; or, *to lead into slavery*; it more likely has a positive connotation. Strong's #5148 BDB #634.

My first impression of this verse is that God first does this, and then does that to the nations. That is, He first causes a nation to flourish and then He destroys them. He enlarges the borders of a nation, and then He leads them away into slavery. This would be a nice poetic parallelism, one which just about every translation seized and held, we have a problem with the last verb—it is consistently used in a good way for God leading a people into prosperity (Gen. 24:27 Ex. 32:34 Neh. 9:19). That causes me to rethink the first verb; there are other readings with this being that Hiphil participle of *shâgâh* (*שָׁגַה*) [pronounced *shaw-GAWH*] which means, in the Hiphil, *to lead astray, to mislead*. Strong's #7686 BDB #993. Notice that the difference between the words is minor and pronunciation is quite similar. Depending upon the Hebrew manuscript that you pick up, some have *sâgâ'* (Strong's #7679) and some have *shâgâh* (#7686). Like other translators, I believe this verse to be a parallelism, but it isn't positive negative, positive negative, it is negative negative, positive positive. Therefore, if this is rendered “[Causing to flourish with respect to the nations and then He destroys them; enlarging the nations and then He leads them \[into slavery\]](#)”; one mistranslates the final verb. However, taking the alternate reading of *shâgâh*, we keep the parallelism and do not have to mistranslate the last verb; that gives us: “[Leading astray with respect to the nations and then He destroys them; enlarging the nations and then He leads them \[into prosperity\]](#).”

Although there are problems with the rendering of this verse, the interpretation is easy. God is in control. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine upon them. You will multiply the nation and You will increase their gladness. They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest and mean rejoice when they divide the spoil (Isa. 9:2–3). And He blesses them and they multiply greatly and He does not let their cattle decrease (Psalm 107:38).

Some nations may think that they have done great things and have expanded their borders on their own, but God chose the limitations. “[For I will drive out nations from before you and I will enlarge your borders and no one will covet your land when you go three times a year to appear before Y^ehowah your God.](#)” (Ex. 34:24). You have increased the nation, O Yehowah; You have increased the nation. You are glorified. You have extended all the borders of the land (Isa. 26:15). “[And He made from one blood every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having predetermined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.](#)” (Acts 17:26). Barnes: [God] has entire control over [the nations]...The sources of prosperity are in his hand, and at his pleasure he can visit them with famine, pestilence, or war, and diminish their numbers and arrest their prosperity.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 252.

**"Removing heart [from] heads of [the]
people of the earth
and He causes them to wander in a desolate
[empty] area, no path [or, direction] [or, in a
pathless waste]."**

Job 12:24

**"Removing understanding from the heads of
the people of the earth.
Furthermore, He causes them to wander in a
desolate empty area without direction."**

The first verb is the Hiphil participle of *çûwr* (חוּר) [pronounced *soor*] which means *to turn aside*, in the Qal; however, in the Hiphil, it means *to cause to depart, to remove, to take away*. Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693. What is removed is *lê'v* (לֵב) [pronounced *lay'b*], which literally means *heart*; and figuratively means *inner man, mind, will, thinking*. Strong's #3820 BDB #524. The next word is *rô'sh* (רֹשֶׁת) [pronounced *roshe*], which means *head, top, chief, front, choicest, leading division*. Strong's #7218 BDB #910. *He leaves them to infatuated and distracted counsels. By withdrawing from them, he has power to frustrate their plans, and to leave them to an entire want of wisdom.*⁵⁶

The first verb of the second line is the Hiphil imperfect of *tâ'âh* (תָּעַה) [pronounced *taw-AWH* or *taw-GAWH*] and it means *to go astray, to wander*. It is wandering without a guide, sheep going astray without a shepherd, a person acting without a moral compass. In the Hiphil, this means *to cause to err, to cause to wander*. Strong's #8582 BDB #1073. When a people becomes extremely degenerate and powerful, rather than moving in straight lines from their original territory to conquer the area around them, God causes them to wander aimlessly. *They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region. They did not find a way to an inhabited city* (Psalm 107:4).

Where He causes them to wander is in *tôhû* (תוּה) [pronounced *TOE-hoo*], the word used in Gen. 1:2; it means *a waste-place, a desolate area, desolate, an empty waste, chaos, trashed, formlessness, confusion, unreality, nothingness, emptiness*. Strong's #8414 BDB #1062. This is followed by the negative and the masculine singular substantive *derek* (דְּרֵק) [pronounced *DEH-rek*] which means *way, distance, road, journey, manner, course*. Strong's #1870 BDB #202. Together, they might mean a *pathless waste*. Barnes: *They are like persons in a vast waste of pathless sands without a waymark, a guide or a path. The perplexity and confusion of the great ones of the earth could not be more strikingly represented than by the condition of such a lost traveler.*⁵⁷

**"They will grope in the dark and no light;
He causes them to wander like the drunken
man."**

Job 12:25

**"They will grope in the darkness without
light;
He causes them to stagger about like a
drunken man."**

Again, Job is making the simple point that God is the One ultimately in charge. He also is making parody reference to what Eliphaz had said: "By day they meet with darkness; and at noon they grope as in the night." (Job 5:14). Moses warned the children of Israel of the same thing: "Y^ehowah will strike you down with madness and with blindness and with confusion of heart; and you will grope at noon, just as the blind man gropes in darkness; and you will not prosper in your ways, but you will only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you." (Deut. 28:28–29).

This is where we are without divine guidance; without the light of His Word. And He spoke and raised up a stormy wind which lifted up the waves of the sea. They rose up to the heavens and they went down to the depths. Their soul melted away in misery. They reeled and staggered like a drunken man and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to Y^ehowah in their trouble and He brought them out of their distresses. He caused the storm to be still so that the waves of the sea were hushed (Psalm 107:25–28).

Barnes: *Their unstable and perplexed counsels are like the reelings of a drunken man...Job has shown them that he was as familiar with proverbs respecting God as they were, and that he entertained as exalted ideas of the*

⁵⁶ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 252.

⁵⁷ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; p. 252.

control and government of the Most High as they did. It may be added, that these are sublime and beautiful expressions respecting God. They surpass all that can be found in the writings of the heathen; and they show that somehow in the earliest ages there prevailed views of God which the human mind for ages afterwards, and in the most favourable circumstances, was not capable of originating. These proverbial sayings were doubtless fragments of revealed truth, which had come down by tradition, and which were thus embodied in a form convenient to the transmitted from age to age.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ Barnes' Notes, Job, Volume 1; Baker Books, ©1996; pp. 252–3.