

Job 21

Job 21:1–34

Job Answers Zophar

Outline of Chapter 21:

- vv. 1–6 **Introduction: “Listen to this.”**
- vv. 7–12 **Job gives the example of the rich and their children**
- vv. 13–16 **Job makes it clear that we are speaking about unbelievers**
- vv. 17–21 **The rich do not suffer certain retribution here on this earth**
- vv. 22–26 **Death comes to all men alike**
- vv. 27–31 **The flaws of the arguments of Job’s companions**
- vv. 32–34 **The rich infidel even enjoys a marvelous funeral**

Charts:

- v. 7 **Why Do the Wicked Continue to Live?**
- v. 9 **Progressive Revelation and Why Does God Allow the Ungodly to be Successful?**
- v. 11 **The Hebrew vs. the Greek of Job 21:11–12**
- v. 15 **Why Should We Pray to God?**
- v. 19 **The Six Interpretations of Job 21:19**
- v. 21 **Job 21:17–21**
- v. 21 **Job 21:17–21—the Less Literal Translations**
- v. 23 **New American Bible’s Placement of V. 22**
- v. 33 **Job 21:31–33—A Messianic Passage?**

Introduction: One of the things which has bothered me slightly in this book is that it seems as though no one really answers the questions raised by the previous person. They just allow themselves to fill up with stuff to say, and, when it comes their turn, they say it. The points made previously do not seem to play a part in their reasoning. Perhaps this is not unlike the typical argument of the husband and wife. In Job 21, Job takes the unusual tact of answering Zophar directly, as well as the positions of the other two. The general positions taken by Job’s companions are: (1) God disciplines the godless who abandon Him or who sin willingly and knowingly against Him; (2) that when someone is under tremendous discipline and pressure that simply means that they have sinned against God; (3) this is well-attested to by observation; and, (4) this is found in countless extant proverbs of wisdom. In fact, Job will refute their position point-by-point in this chapter.¹ What he deals with primarily is the fact that there are rich and successful infidels. Also, with this chapter, we will complete the 2nd round of speeches.²

A short outline of this chapter: vv. 1–6, introduction; vv. 7–16, Job refutes the idea that wicked men receive in this life their just rewards; vv. 17–34, the rich, successful infidel is not suddenly taken out of this life in discipline. The *Open Bible* sums up: *Many wicked people live and die without suffering. If the doctrine of retribution does not always apply to the wicked, it may not always apply to those who suffer.*³

Unfortunately, unlike some of Job’s previous speeches, what we have in this chapter what at first appears to be of less spiritual import. Upon my first read, I thought that there was nothing of the Messiah in this chapter, nothing of prophecy—however, near the end, there are three verses which, when taken out of context, do give us a hint of

¹ Which prompts me to ask the obvious question—why will there be a third round of talks if Job obliterates their arguments in this chapter? Also, interestingly enough, most commentaries and translations do not reference the specific passages which Job directly answers (Barnes was about the best here, with the NIV Study Bible following close behind).

² On a personal note, I will probably return to I Chron. 9 and then begin my exegesis of I Samuel and pick up with this study in the future sometime.

³ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 694.

Messiah to come. However, do not think that apart from those three verses that there is nothing of substance in this chapter. Job brings up some tremendous observations of man and God's dealings with man which are extremely relevant even to man today. Also, my favorite part, Job reveals a biting sarcasm, which I personally tend to find quite entertaining.

Job's primary point in this chapter is that there were unbelieving men of his and Zophar's era who were rich and successful; and their observable lives were lives of ease, pretty much from the cradle to the grave. In other words, in this life, you do not necessarily reap what you sow in a spiritual sense. That is, a man who rejected God was not necessarily a man who then lost his business and home. Job has before mentioned that there are times when unbelievers and believers were treated the same (Job 9:22–24 12:6); however, this time, he devotes the bulk of his speech to that theme, which contradicts most of what his friends—particularly Zophar—have said about him. Kelly explains it this way: *As at the close of the first round of discussions (chs. 12–14), so here, the author represents Job s finally coming to deal with the main point of the friends' speeches. They have drawn in great detail the picture of the wicked man living in terror and despair, facing imminent destruction, afflicted all his days, and never really enjoying his prosperity. This picture Job now systematically destroys. He attacks it from every side and in the end leaves no line of it unchallenged.*⁴ Barnes: *[Job] states as a fact that they [some infidels] are prosperous...They live to a great age; they are mighty; their houses are secure; they are successful in business; they have instruments of joy in their dwellings; they and their families live in thoughtless mirth; they die without long-continued pain; and all this, when the effect of their whole lives has been to exclude God from their dwellings, and they have been saying to Him depart from us.*⁵

The idea is quite simple here: Job's friends have accused Job of having some secret sin (Zophar even mused as to what that sin was); and their proof was the fact that Job was under great suffering. Well, Job say, "What about that rich infidel, Charlie Brown, who just lives down the street? He built up a successful business apart from God, and he suffered no earthly retribution. In fact, even his funeral was a spectacle of riches, excess and fame."

To give you a brief synopsis of this chapter, Job takes the floor and demands their attention (vv. 1–5). He tells them that he should be appalled with them (actually, *with them* is understood, although Job and his companions have been fairly careful not to name their opposition except through innuendo. To paraphrase Kelly, everything that Job says in this introduction points to the radical nature of the stand that he is about to take. He warns his friends in these first couple verses to be prepared for an appalling revelation which will place great stain on them and their thinking.⁶ Job thinks about his own physical condition and he is personally shocked by it (v. 6). Then, beginning in v. 7 and going through most of the remainder of the chapter, Job presents the antithesis to Zophar's observations—that there are rich and successful and prosperous infidels out there whose existence seems to be easy from the cradle to the grave. V. 19 is our first real problem in translation and interpretation. What most translations have done is indicate that Job first quotes a possible position of Zophar and company and then states reasons why that position is wrong. The problem here is that, in the Hebrew, it is not clear that Job is quoting from Zophar or his two friends. Therefore, several translations have inserted a few words here to smooth out this translation, and to aide this particular interpretation. I tried to interpret it apart from the insertion of the words, and it just did not make much sense without the insertion. Now, what is often lost in an in depth analysis such as I do, is the context and the flow of the passage. Therefore, once we get to v. 21, I will regroup and we will look at this passage as a whole, and there I will offer several different interpretations before giving you the most reasonable and final interpretation.

Now, in this chapter, even at the death of the case history infidel, Job does not really deal with eternal judgment because that was never Zophar's point. Zophar spoke about one receiving on earth one's just reward, so Job deals with what some infidels receive on this earth. Even in their death (vv. 22–26), the rich infidel's funeral itself is a wonderment of prosperity. The often die quickly and with little pain, and then their death is mourned by an innumerable number of people. How is this a man's just reward? And this is easily observed in the time of Job and

⁴ *The Layman's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8*, Balmer H. Kelly, John Knox Press, ©1962, p. 105.

⁵ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 346.

⁶ Paraphrased from *The Layman's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8*, Balmer H. Kelly, John Knox Press, ©1962, p. 105.

Zophar as it is in our time. Job finally concludes by telling his companions that their comfort of him is nonexistent and what they are pawning off as truth is a lie (v. 34).

Job's three companions have stated that man receives in this life the retribution that he deserves. Job gives a common example—one with he and his associates have observed— where this is not the case. What he also anticipates in their argument (this is by way of interpretation), is that the sins of the fathers are saved up and poured out on their sons—and Job manifestly deals with this argument as well, before it is even presented. His thinking appears to be, "Let me deal with all possible objections to my argument before they speak." It is important to note that the Mosaic Law (which was not extent during the time of Job) does not confer the punishment for the sins of the fathers upon their sons.

At the end of this chapter, we have two very interesting insertions—I guess to let us know that the Holy Spirit is still taking part in this discussion. Without leaving the context, the Holy Spirit, speaking through Job, speaks of an association between milk and healthy bones—thousands of years before such nutritional information was known; and, at the end of this chapter (vv. 31–33), we have a passage that, when removed from its context, sounds a great deal like the Suffering Messiah. Perhaps it is the Holy Spirit's way of saying, "Hey, I am still here and this is still the Word of God." We would never expect unusual diversions like this in ancient secular literature.

As we go through the book of Job, there are times when you might question just how important is the book of Job? Job was written during a time when perhaps only the first half of the book of Genesis existed. Not every doctrine had been fleshed out. There were salient points beyond *sin, bad; not sinning, good*. Some of these points were fleshed out in the book of Job. The idea that each and every believer and unbeliever receives the just rewards for his sins (or lack of them) on this earth is preposterous, and so stated in this book—chiefly in this chapter.

Now, let me tell you that when I began this chapter, which is where I will take a break from the book of Job, I thought, "This chapter does not appear to deal with the Messiah; I don't see any real important doctrines; I should be able to dispense with these 34 verses in about 34 pages." I had no reason, upon my first reading, that this chapter should require much time to exegete and interpret. After doing the translating, I go back and more carefully exegete as well as interpret, and I now expect that it may take twice as many pages to cover this chapter. Also, I went from being only slightly interested in what Job had to say to being very interested. It is one of those chapters that seems to grow on you. The deeper I looked, the more I appreciated what I found.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Introduction: "Listen to this."

Literally:

Smoother English rendering:

And so answered Job and so he said,

Job 21:1 And so Job answered and said,

Then Job replied,

With this chapter, we will begin to complete our second round of talks. In this talk, Job will directly speak to the issue which Zophar raised: that it is obvious that the corrupt may enjoy prosperity, but it is only for a short time. Job will take issue with that view. One of the other issues which Zophar raised—that Job was corrupt in his personal business practices (which is seen as the source of Job's former prosperity—is not answered by Job.

**"You all listen a listening [to] my word
and let this be your consolations.**

Job
21:2

**"Listen [and continue] to listen to my
argument
and let this be your consolation.**

**“Now listen carefully to my point of view
and also allow me to offer you my consolation.”**

Let's see what others have done first:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Hear ye patiently my words, And let this be your consolation:
JPS (Tanakh)	Listen well to what I say, And let this be your consolation.
Keil and Delitzsch	Hear, oh hear, my speech, And let this be instead of your consolations.
NASB	“Listen carefully to my speech, And let this be your way of consolation.”
The Septuagint	Hear ye, hear ye my words, that I may not have this consolation from you.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Hear ye diligently my word, And this is your consolation.

We begin this verse with two forms of the verb *shâma* (שָׁמַע) [pronounced *shaw-MAHĠ*], which means *to listen, listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, listen and take heed to, listen and take note of, listen and be cognizant of*. Strong's #8085 BDB #1033. It is found in the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative, and then in the Qal infinitive absolute. The Qal infinitive absolute has four uses: ❶ when found alone, it sometimes acts as an English gerund, so that we may add *ing* to the end of the verb; ❷ When found directly before its verbal cognate, it serves to intensify or strengthen the action or the meaning of the verb which follows; ❸ When it follows its cognate verb, it emphasizes the duration or the continuation of the verbal idea; and, ❹ it is sometimes used as a substitute for a finite verb form.⁷ Here's the idea: Job wants them to listen and to continue listening to all that he has to say. Zophar has set up this argument and now Job intends to answer it. This is followed by *my word*, and we may loosely render this *my train of thought, my argument, my dissertation*. This gives us: **Listen [and continue] to listen to my argument**. The doubling of a verb often intensifies the verb, so we might render this as: **Listen diligently and carefully to my argument**.

The second line begins with a *wâw* conjunction and the 3rd person feminine singular, apocopated, voluntative form of the verb *to be*, followed by the feminine singular demonstrative adjective. **And let this be...** Then we have the feminine plural of *tan^echûwmôwth* (תַּנְחִימוּת) [pronounced *tan^e-khoo-MOHTH*], which means *consolation, comfort, solace*. It is only found in Job 15:11^J21:2 and its masculine plural counterpart is found in Psalm 94:19 Isa. 66:11 Jer. 16:7. Our English sense of the word would be in the singular. Strong's #8575 BDB #637. This gives us: **And let this be your consolation**. Do you grasp the biting sarcasm here? Job may be down for the count, but his brain is still functioning. Job's friends have come to console him; to offer him solace. However, the situation that Job is in has caused them so much confusion and mental consternation, that Job finds it necessary to offer them comfort and consolation. What Job is going through has caused their brains to hurt; they have over-thought and consequently confused the situation. Their brains hurt from thinking so much. They have thought and thought and thought and all they can come up with are some lame observations about life which are patently inaccurate. Job is going to straighten them out in this chapter. Job is going to tell them just how the rich infidel lives in this world, which is the complete opposite of what they have said. Since all this inaccurate thinking has caused their brains to overload with false and inaccurate information, Job offers them some consolation in this chapter for their hurt brains. He will straighten out their confused thinking and, in the process, guide and console them.

There is also a literary framing or bracketing which occurs here. In this verse, the beginning of his answer to Zophar and the other two, Job speaks of comforting them; and in the very last verse of this chapter, Job uses the verbal cognate of *tan^echûwmôwth*, which is *nâcham* (נָחַם) [pronounced *naw-KHAHM*]. Whether Job has this in mind here, or whether he thinks of it later in his speech is unknown. In any case, he is thinking not simply line by line, or concept by concept, but Job's mind spans the entirety of his argument. How many of you can present a cogent but detailed, on-target argument, and then provide a literary frame for it as well? Job would have made a hell of a chess player.

⁷ *Biblical Hebrew*; Page Kelley; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., ©1992, pp. 184–185.

**[You all] bear with me and I [even I] will speak; Job Bear with me and I, even I, will speak;
and after my speaking, you all mock. 21:3 and after I speak, you [may] ridicule.**

**Bear with me and allow me to speak;
but after I speak, then you can continue to mock me.**

Let's see what others have done with this:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Suffer me, that 1 may speak, And <after I have spoken thou canst mock!
JPS (Tanakh)	Bear with me while I speak, And after I have spoken, you may mock.
NASB	"Bear with me that I may speak; Then after I have spoken, you may mock."
The Septuagint	Raise me, and I will speak; then you will not laugh me to scorn.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Bear with me, and I speak, And after my speaking—ye may deride.

Again, Job uses a 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative verb (with a 1st person suffix of *nâsâ`* (אֲנִי)) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], which means *to lift up, to bear, to carry*. It also carries with it the same connotation of our word *bear*, as in *bear with me*. Job is simply asking them to indulge him in this matter. Strong's #5375 (and Strong's #4984) BDB #669. He completes this line with the *wâw* conjunction, the 1st person personal pronoun and the 1st person singular, Piel imperfect of *to speak*. This gives us: **Bear [with] me and I [even] I will speak...**

In the second line, we have the *wâw* conjunction again, then adverb *after*, and then the Piel infinitive construct, 1st person singular suffix of *to speak* again. *And after my speaking...* is the most literal rendering. Then we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of *lâ`ag* (אָגַדְתָּ) [pronounced *law-ĠAHG*], which means *to ridicule, to mock, to scorn, to laugh at, to stammer, to deride*. Strong's #3932 BDB #541. This gives us: **...and after my speaking, you [singular] [may] mock [me]**. So, Job is going to offer his compatriots some comfort for a moment—a little consolation, if you will—and then he will allow them to return to their mocking of him. He is so marvelously sarcastic⁸ in this couple verses. The 2nd person masculine singular means that he is focusing his attention upon Zophar, who was the previous speaker.

So here Job is—he is offering consolation to his friends—particularly to Zophar—for their hurt brains because they have just been thinking way too much—and now he asks them to give him some time to speak, so that he can straighten out their errant thinking. Certainly, once they are done, Job tells them that they can return to mocking him—and he directs that comment directly at Zophar. You may not grasp just how powerful and sarcastic Job's speech is here, as that is often lost in the translation, but he is so tough on Zophar that Zophar will not ever speak again. Job will shut him down with this chapter.

Barnes gives a slightly different interpretation to this final line. As he explains it, Job's argument will be so completely devastating that all that Job's friends could say afterwards could be only classified as mocking. In any case, when Job launches into his argument (the following verse), he begins with a great deal of sarcasm, as we will see.

What? I to Adam [or, man] my complaint? And if why do not be short my spirit?	Job 21:4	Do I [make] my complaint to Adam? Why should I not be short of spirit [i.e., short-tempered, impatient or irritated]?
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**Should I be making a complaint to Adam?
Why shouldn't I be irritated and impatient with you?**

⁸ I believe that his sarcasm was lost to the translator of the Septuagint; as the Septuagint inserts a negative in the second line, so that Job is simply stating, "After you hear my argument, then you will be unable to mock me."

With v. 4, we begin Job's introduction to his speech, part II. He does not yet launch into his main thesis, but he deals with some introductory material first. In vv. 2–3, he got the attention of his friends, albeit with no little sarcasm. In this verse, he references directly back to something which Zophar said, and responds rather harshly to it. Let's see how others translated this verse first:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Did I <unto man> make my complaint? Wherefore then, should my spirit not be impatient?
JPS (Tanakh)	Is my complaint directed toward a man? Why should I not lose my patience?
Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	As for me, then, does my complaint concern man, Or why should I not become impatient?
NASB	“As for me, is my complaint to [or, <i>against</i>] man? And why should I [lit., <i>my spirit</i>] not be impatient?”
NEB	May not I too voice my thoughts? Have not I as good cause to be impatient?
The Septuagint	What is my reproof of man? And why should I not be angry?
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	—to man is my complaint? and if so, wherefore May not my temper become short?

With respect to this first verse, Barnes tells us: *There is some difficulty in the interpretation of this verse, and considerable variety of explanation may be seen among expositors.*⁹ The primary explanation which I found is that Job is saying that his complaint is not to man but to God.¹⁰ For instance, Barnes further explains on p. 347 that Job is saying that his trouble and his complaints are not man-related but God-related. *Severe and cutting as were their rebukes, yet it was far more trying to him to be treated as he had been by God, as if he were a great sinner. That was what he could not understand. Perplexed and troubled, therefore, by the mysteriousness of the divine dealings, his friends ought to be willing to listen patiently to what he had to say; and in his anxiety to find out why God had treated him so, they ought not at once to infer that he was a wicked man, and to overwhelm him with increased anguish of the spirit.* The problem is that, even though much of this is true, Job does not really pursue this line of thought. What we need is a better translation which will result in a better interpretation. What is wrong with this interpretation is that we would expect a complementary second line saying, “No, my complaint is to God.” However, we don't find that in the second line, and the interpretation suggested by so many is not what Job is saying in this verse. The chief problem with the *interpretation* is the *translation*. Straighten out the *translation* and many times, that will straighten out the *interpretation*. This is one of the reasons why I tear these verses apart word-by-word.

This verse begins with the interrogative particle and the 1st person pronoun, the lamed preposition and the masculine singular noun ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced *aw-DAWM*], which means *a man, a human being, mankind, Adam*. Strong's #120 BDB #9. You will recall that Zophar used this exact same word back in the previous chapter (also v. 4), when he said that what he was about to say has been clearly evident since man (*Adam*) was placed on this earth (Zophar's exact quote was: “*Do you know this [that is to follow] [which has been true] from antiquity; since the placing of Adam on [this] earth?*”). Now, Job cries out, “*What—!—to Adam—...*” and he then follows this with the masculine singular noun *sīyach* (סִיחַ) [pronounced *SEE-ahkh*], and is rendered *communication, complaint, musing, mediation, talk, anxiety, trouble*. Barnes goes into some detail about this word coming from a verb which means *to bring out, to put forth, to produce—as buds, leaves, flowers*; however, this is in relation to words.¹¹ However, in going through the use of the verb and similarly spelled verbs in BDB, I don't find any such implications. Strong's #7879 BDB #967. So, Job responds to what Zophar had to say: “*What? I to Adam my complaint?*” You get this, don't you? Here is Job, emotionally wrought, verbally beat to death by his three *friends*, and now Zophar has brought Adam into the picture. “*What, I have an argument with Adam now? I should now deliver my complaints to Adam?*” This Job is a funny guy! He had his hands full defending himself against three strong and healthy former friends, and now Zophar brings Adam into the picture. So Job asks, “Should I be addressing my complaint to Adam? Is my complaint with Adam? Well, it's no wonder that I'm angry, because you think that I need to talk this over with Adam.” Job's tone is so very sarcastic here. Note that with this new translation and therefore

⁹ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 347.

¹⁰ E.g., *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 347 or *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 747.

¹¹ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 348.

interpretation that Job actually answers what Zophar has said, and that it fits in well with Job's sarcasm which is so prevalent in this chapter.

The second line begins with a wâw conjunction, the hypothetical particle and the adverb maddu'ā (מַדּוּעַ) [pronounced *mah-DOO-ahg*], which means *why, wherefore, on what account*. Strong's #4069 BDB #396. Very often, when a particle and an adverb are together like this, they combine to have another meaning. However, this is not the case with maddu'ā and 'îm. Together, they have no special meaning, according to Gesenius, and 'îm often refers back to the hypothetical particle in the previous line and either continues the question or adds to the question; however, BDB says that maddu'ā is rhetorical when we have a double question, as we do here. In other words, this is not some burning question in the mind of Job—he is asking it to make a point. This is followed by the negative and the feminine singular, Qal imperfect of qâtsar (קָצַר) [pronounced *kaw-TSAHR*], which means *to be short, to come short of, to cut off [with regards to grain], to reap, to harvest*. When this word is used of a hand, e.g., as a *hand being shortened*, it is a reference to powerlessness or lack of strength. When the subject is *spirit*, as we have here, it refers to one's patience wearing thin, being short of spirit is equivalent to being impatient. Strong's #7114 BDB #894. Qâtsar is followed by *my spirit*, giving us: **Or why is my spirit cut short [i.e., impatient]?** I don't know that this is really connected to the previous question. It appears more as though this is an additional question: "Aren't I the one who should be impatient with you?" might be the sense of this. This again goes to answer Zophar's opening remarks, when he said: "That being so, my agitated thoughts cause me to reconsider and because of my feelings of urgency within me. I hear a correction in my criticism and the spirit of my understanding [causes] me to answer. Do you know this [that is to follow] [which has been true] from antiquity since the placing of Adam on [this] earth?" So, Job answers: **Do I [make] my complaint to Adam? Why should I not be short of spirit [i.e., short-tempered, impatient or irritated]?** Zophar has told Job that he had to speak because he was so agitated and because of the spirit of his own understanding—well, Job tells him that it is his own spirit which is shortened; that is, his own patience has been caused to wear thin. Now, do you see how well this hangs together and matches tit for tat? Zophar made some statements, and Job's response parallels those statements. In fact, in this chapter more than any other do we have Job addressing directly what has been said; and the parallelisms that we find in the beginning telegraphs this to us.

**[You all,] turn unto me and be appalled
and [you, Zophar,] put a hand upon [your]
mouth.**

Job
21:5

**Turn toward me and be appalled [all of you];
and [you, Zophar,] put [your] hand over [your]
mouth.**

**All of you, just look at me, and be appalled!
And you, Zophar—you ought to simply shut the hell up!**

Job here tells them to look at whom they are speaking to and to become appalled at their tone and tactics. Others have rendered this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	Look at me and be appalled, And clap your hand to your mouth.
NASB	"Look at me, and be astonished, And put <i>your</i> hand over <i>your</i> mouth."
The Septuagint	Look upon me, and wonder, laying your hand upon your cheek.
Young's Literal Translation	Turn unto me, and be astonished, And put hand to mouth.

The first word is the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative of pânâh (פָּאֵן) [pronounced *paw-NAWH*], which means *to turn, to turn away from, to turn toward, to turn one's face away from, to turn one's face to*. The key to this verb is the face and what the face does. It means *to turn* (in the Qal stem). It can mean *to turn away from*, which is a type of abandonment (Deut. 30:17 Judges 18:20 II Kings 5:12) but it can also mean *to turn toward* (Ex. 16:10 Deut. 31:18). Strong's #6437 BDB #815. This is followed by *unto me*. We then have, of course, the wâw conjunction, and the 2nd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperative of shâmêm (שָׂמַעְתֶּם) [pronounced *shaw-MAIM*] has two distinct meanings: *to be desolate* and *to be appalled*. These meanings are not confined to particular stems, but can be found in all stems. Strong's #8074 BDB #1030. "Turn unto me and be appalled [all of you]!"

Barnes: *That is, attentively look on me, on my sufferings, on my disease, and my losses. See if I am a proper object of reproach and mockery—see if I have not abundant reason to be in deep distress when God has afflicted me in a manner so unusual and mysterious...You should wonder that a man whose life has been a life of piety, should exhibit the spectacle which you now behold, while so many proud condemners of God are permitted to live in affluence and ease.*¹² It's a good point that Barnes makes (which is, so far, only inferred by Job—there are so many anti-God unbelievers out there and they are much more prosperous and less-afflicted than Job, who has always been pious, who has been beaten down by God).¹³

Then Job turns to Zophar and speaks to him directly. We know this because he uses the wāw conjunction and then the 2nd person masculine *singular*, Qal imperative of sîym (סִיַּם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. This is followed by *hand upon mouth* (there are no possessive pronominal suffixes found here). “**And [you, Zophar], place a hand upon a mouth!**” My thinking is the lack of the personal suffixes was for emphasis. We would add them for emphasis. “**And you, Zophar, put your hand over your mouth.**” That this is parallel to our concept of placing one's hand over one's mouth (i.e., *shut up*), is found in Judges 18:19 Job 29:9 40:4.

Job tells his companions that they should look upon him, the man they are verbally beating up, and be appalled. And Zophar, in particula, just needs to shut his mouth. You might be thinking that perhaps I am being too harsh here. Zophar shuts up—he does not speak for the remainder of the book of Job. Job wasn't kidding here. He took away Zophar's speaking privileges right here in this passage. Zophar was finished. He could sit and listen, and that was it.

**And if I remember and I am dismayed
and seizes my flesh a trembling.**

Job
21:6

**Now, when I call to mind [my condition],
I am overwhelmed
and my body is seized [with] shuddering.**

**Now, when I call to mind my condition,
I am overwhelmed and my body is seized with a frightful trembling.**

Although the previous couple verses were fairly easy to translate and to understand, this one is slightly more difficult:

JPS (Tanakh)	When I think of it I am terrified; My body is seized with shuddering.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	Even if I think of it, I am bewildered, And my flesh takes a hold on trembling [or, <i>my flesh trembles</i>].
NASB	“Even when I remember, I am disturbed, And horror takes hold of my flesh.”
The Septuagint	For when I remember, I am alarmed, and pains seize my flesh.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Yea, if I have remembered, then I have been troubled, And my flesh hath taken fright.

We begin with the conjunction and the hypothetical particle ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced *eem*], which means *if*. However, ʾîm can almost mean *when, since, though* when (or, if) followed by a perfect tense. Strong's #518 BDB #49. This is followed by the 1st person singular, Qal perfect of zâkar (זָכַר) [pronounced *zaw-KAHR*] means which means *remember, recall, call to mind*. Strong's #2142 BDB #269. This is followed by the wāw conjunction (which sort of completes the use of the hypothetical particle), as would *then* complete an *if* in English. Then we have the 1st person singular, Niphal perfect, pausal form of bâchal (בָּחַל) [pronounced *baw-KHAHL*], which means, in the Niphal, *dismayed, disquieted, disturbed, terrified, overwhelmed*. Strong's #926 BDB #96. You may be wondering, how exactly does Job forget what is going on? Although I personally have not faced even a tenth of what Job has faced, over the past year, I have been in two ongoing situations which have been extremely difficult and stressful. There are times that I forget about these circumstances and there are times when I recall them. When I call them

¹² *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 348.

¹³ Job will clearly make these points in this chapter.

to my mind, I am appalled and overwhelmed. Job is similarly affected (and with more reason). He is so drawn into the argument with his three companions, that he temporarily forgets his losses and perhaps even some of his pain (this is simply known as mind over matter). What has happened to him is beyond his ability to fix, to make sense of, to fully grasp. He is completely confused, dismayed and overwhelmed by his circumstances.

The second line is the one which requires a little more finesse. We begin with the usual conjunction followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *ʿâchaz* (אָחַז) [pronounced *aw-KHAHZ*]; and it means *to grasp, to take hold of, to take possession of*. Strong's #270 BDB #28. This is followed by the subject of the verb—the masculine singular noun *bâsâr* (בָּשָׂר) [pronounced *baw-SAWR*], which means *flesh*, or to the human *body*. Strong's #1320 BDB #142. With this is the 1st person singular suffix, and then we have the feminine singular noun *pallâtsûwth* (פָּלְצוּת) [pronounced *pahl-law-tzooth*], which means *a trembling, a shuddering*. Less literally, it means *a fright, a horror, a scare*. It is found only in Job 21:6 Psalm 55:6 Isa. 21:4 Ezek. 7:18, however there is a related verb which gives credence to this translation. Strong's #6427 BDB #814. What we would expect is for the verb to be in the passive Niphal stem (“My body has been seized by a trembling.”) or for the verb to be a feminine singular rather than a masculine singular (“A trembling has seized my body.”). Without either of those changes, what we have, literally, is: “My body has seized a trembling.” Barnes (speaking for Job): *I have an internal shuddering and horror when I recall the scenes through which I have passed, I am myself utterly overwhelmed at the magnitude of my own sufferings, and they are such as should excite commiseration in your hearts.*¹⁴ Barnes goes on: *His object is undoubtedly to show them that there was enough in his case to awe them into silence; and he says, in order to show that, that the recollection of his sufferings perfectly overwhelmed him, and filled him with horror. They who have passed through scenes of peculiar danger, or of great bodily suffering, can easily sympathize with Job here. The very recollection will make their flesh tremble.*¹⁵

The idea is that, when Job thinks about his situation—when his mind is brought into focus concerning his situation and condition—his body (his entire being) is seized with a shuddering. It is like this horribly bad nightmare, that, for a moment, it seems that he might wake up from, and then he realizes that this is his life.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Job Gives the Example of the Rich and Their Children

In the following section, Job will explain why Zophar's explanation does not harmonize with, but actually contradicts the observable data. McGee: *Job is now going to point out a fallacy in their argument. The wicked do not always suffer in this life; in fact, they may prosper. They are not always cut off; sometimes they attain old age and their property remains intact and their children are able to inherit it.*¹⁶ It is this verse which begins the main point of the entire chapter—that the wicked often enjoy great prosperity; that life does not treat them poorly because of their lack of character; that they often give overt, verbal rejections of God; and that still their lives are often long and prosperous.

**Why [the] malevolent ones live;
they move [forward in life], moreover, they
have become more powerful than power.**

Job
21:7

**Why do the lawless [continue to] live?
They advance [in years]; moreover, they have
strengthened [themselves] in power.**

**Why do the lawless and corrupt continue to live?
Clearly, they grow old; furthermore, they continue to increase their power.**

¹⁴ Barnes' Notes; *Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 348. The idea that this is somehow connected to the prosperity of wicked men—i.e., Job shudders when thinking of the prosperity of the infidel—is an untenable interpretation, which Barnes mentions on this page (he also finds it to be an unreasonable interpretation).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ J. Vernon McGee; *Job*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1977; p. 120.

Now Job begins to respond directly to Zophar's points. Zophar has pointed out that, ever since the time of Adam, man has enjoyed blessing if he was righteous, and the wicked always eventually received their just reward here on earth. Job, with this verse, disputes this *well-known* fact. Kelly: *Moreover, [Job] regards his own view as obvious, for without preliminary statement, he abruptly asks why it is that the wicked live to a ripe age and prosper all of their lives...In contrast to Zophar's description of the transient security of the wicked, of his loneliness, of his terror and misery, Job speaks of the wicked as enjoying full and uninterrupted security, surrounded by happy, playing children.*¹⁷ The other translations read:

JPS (Tanakh)	Why do the wicked live on, Prosper and grow wealthy?
NASB	"Why do the wicked <i>still</i> live, Continue on, also become very powerful?"
The Septuagint	Why do the ungodly live, and grow old even in wealth?
The Vulgate	Why do the ungodly live and [continue to be] comforted in riches?
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Wherefore do the wicked live? They have become old, Yea, they have been mighty in wealth.

We begin this verse with the adverb *maddu'a* again—(מַדּוּא) [pronounced *mah-DOO-ahg*], which means *why, wherefore, on what account*. Strong's #4069 BDB #396. It is followed by the masculine plural adjective (used as a substantive) of *râshâ' (רָשָׁע)* [pronounced *raw-SHAWG*], which means *malevolent, lawless, corrupt, criminal*. As a noun, it should be rendered *malevolent ones, lawless ones, criminals, corrupt*. Strong's #7563 BDB #957. The verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *châyâh (חַיָּה)* [pronounced *khaw-YAW*], which means, *to live, to have life, to revive, to recover health, to be healed, to be refreshed*. Strong's #2421 & 2425 BDB #310. The imperfect is the incomplete tense, meaning that this is an ongoing process. "**Why do the lawless continue to live?**" This should have been a fact obvious to all—there were corrupt men upon the earth and they continued to live.

Why Do the Wicked Continue to Live?

(This is by Albert Barnes,¹⁸ edited by me)

1. The wicked are allowed to live because this reveals the forbearance and long-suffering of God.
2. To furnish a walking illustration of the character of the human heart. We are all fallen creatures and our very nature rejects God entirely.
3. To allow the unbeliever ample time to repent (change their mind) and to turn toward God. That way, when called before God, having rejected their only Savior, they cannot complain that they did not have enough time. **God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a change of mind [toward the Savior]** (I Peter 3:9b).
4. God chooses to make some men monuments of His mercy, which more fully displays the richness of His grace in their conversion (e.g., Paul, John Bunyan and John Newton). The Apostle Paul, for instance, was a very successful man in the realm of the Jewish religion, and his conversion was a great sign to other Jewish religious unbelievers (as well as to many believers).
5. The wicked are kept alive by God so that they may be preserved as the instrument of His will (e.g., the Pharaoh of Egypt, Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar). God should have removed the Pharaoh of Egypt from the throne after he rejected the demands of Moses, who had been sent by God. However, God continued to give Pharaoh the ability to reject God's will, so that God's incredible power could be revealed (the exodus stood as a monument to God's power for centuries to follow).
6. God allows the infidel to live that the great interests of society may be carried on; that their affairs of the commercial and the political world might be forwarded by their commercial skills and talents.

(see also **Progressive Revelation and Why Does God Allow the Ungodly to be Successful?**)

¹⁷ *The Layman's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8*, Balmer H. Kelly, John Knox Press, ©1962, p. 105.

¹⁸ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 349.

In the second line, we have 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of ʿāthaq (אָתַחַק) [pronounced *gaw-THAHK*], which looks to be a problem for us. BDB gives its Qal meanings as *to move, to advance [in years]*, and its Hiphil meanings as *to move forward, to proceed, to remove, to transcribe [to move the words from an old manuscript to a new one]*.

Gesenius gives similar, but not identical meanings. In the Qal, Gesenius says its means *to be removed, to be transferred, to be stricken with age, to become old, to be manumitted, to be set free*; its Hiphil meanings are given as *to remove away, to take away, to transfer, to transcribe, to take away*. One adjective cognate means *bold, impudent, forward* (Strong's #6277). Another means *shining, handsome, enduring* (the former two are the general accepted meanings and the latter is Gesenius' take on the matter—Strong's #6276). Now, I know that this may seem like a little thing, but there is nothing which requires this verb to mean *to remove*; although it clearly means *to move* (Job 14:18 18:4 32:33). And when we have it used to mean *transcribe*; it is used more in the sense of *moving* words from one manuscript to another rather than the concept of *removing* words. Our meaning of *forward* (as in *bold, aggressive*) appears to have a Hebrew counterpart here; and the adjective is related to the verbal meaning of *to move, to advance*. The other adjectival meaning seems to line up quite well with the idea of *enduring*. Therefore, we can take the meaning of ʿāthaq as *to move, to move forward, to advance*; and, in Prov. 25:1, *to transcribe*. Strong's #6275 BDB #801.

Then we have the adverb gam (גַּם) [pronounced *gahm*], which means *also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. Then we have the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of gāḇvar (גָּבַר) [pronounced *gaw^b-VAHR*], which means *to be strong, to be mighty, to exhibit greater strength than, to be stronger than, to prevail over*. Strong's #1396 BDB #149. This is followed by the masculine singular (pausal form) of chayil (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*] and it means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power, might*; as well as that which is gotten through strength—i.e., *wealth, substance*. Strong's #2428 BDB #298. This gives us: **They advance [in years]; moreover, they have become more powerful than power.** My thinking is that the latter phrase is a colloquialism of the day. Job's stand here was based upon observable facts by his friends and by him. He did not have to point out examples, just as I don't need to necessarily name contemporary examples. There is abundant evidence of the long life and prosperity of some of those who stand in opposition to God. Those who take a clear stand against God are sometimes removed early in life, and sometimes God allows them to live. Examples of both could be produced, in Job's time, and now—whereas, the viewpoint of their friends was that every infidel and every man who had turned against God was cut off early in life.

We know of corrupt and immoral and amoral men who live today—they prosper, they grow old, they continue to amass wealth and power. A simple example is Bill Gates—he is not a man of God; he has even offered his *Ten Commandments* for today (or was it twelve?¹⁹), all which center on computer-related things (what a surprise). It is not that he is tremendously immoral the way conservative Christians today rate immorality—his business practices have certainly been less than above board and honorable;²⁰ and the promises he delivers on each successive operating system often go unfulfilled. However, he continues to be the richest and one of the most powerful men in the world. God is not blessing him because he is a great man; God has allowed him to prosper. If we were to review the rich and powerful of the twentieth century, it is unlikely that we would find many mature Christians among them. God allows men, corrupt and otherwise, to prosper in world goods. So it was in Job's time. The observations of Zophar were patently false, and so Job points out in this verse. Job could not take it any longer—Zophar was wrong, wrong, wrong; and Job points this out. Now, Job made mention of this before; in Job 12:6, he said, **The tents of the destroyers prosper, and those who provoke God are secure, [those] whom God brings into his power.** However, this was but one statement buried within a three chapter response to Zophar's first speech; and this comment was obviously missed by Job's three companions.

The deeper question is *why is this so?* Why are there men who are rich and successful, yet eschew God? Why doesn't God crush them as an example? Jeremiah asks the same question of God: **You are righteous, O Jehovah,**

¹⁹ I recall reading these in a magazine in the gym.

²⁰ His operating system and office suite versions have triumphed in the business world over better contemporary software; building the better mousetrap is not certain assurance that men will flock to your door. That has been done and there was little flocking to the doors of his competitors. He triumphed in the market place due to business practices (and God's grace) and not because he built a better mousetrap. And I make these statements as I type with a Windows OS in the background.

so that I will plead my case with You. Indeed, I will discuss matters of justice with You. Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease? You have planted them, they have also taken root. They grow and they have even produced fruit. You are near their lips but far from their emotions. And You know me, O Jehovah. You see me, and You examine my heart's attitude toward You. Drag these others off like sheep for the slaughter and set them apart for a day of carnage! (Jer. 12:1–3). Jeremiah, here, was speaking of those who speak as though they have a relationship with God, but, in fact, they do not. An entire psalm (Psalm 73) was devoted to this particular topic (which Psalm, we will study next). In other words, this is a major topic for the Word of God, and it is found in its infancy in this passage right here.

Barnes points out that it is interesting that Job has not raised this point and developed it further until now, as it seems as though that would have put an end to a lot of what his friends had to say.²¹ However, Job may have considered the fact of his piety, his former relationship with these friends, and his position to stand in argument against what they have said; and he may have thought at first that the fact that the wicked prosper is too obvious to point out; therefore, he only alluded to that a couple of times.

Job, in the chapter, does not even deal with those who pretend to have such a relationship, but with those who give no verbal or visual signs that they have an interest in God, yet are successful in their lives and families. Both of these men state an important question. Why should a man pursue God if there appears to be, at times, no earthly reward? Some of us have, in our circle of acquaintances, people who are successful in their lives, yet eschew all that is God. This will be one of the topics that we will deal with in this chapter (we're not ready for it yet).

Their seed [firmly established to their faces with them and their offsprings [or, children] to their [two] eyes.	Job 21:8	Their dynasty is firmly established in their presence with them and their offspring [are established] before their eyes.
Their dynasty is firmly established before them as are their children in their sight.		

Job continues with his argument. Let's first see what others have done:

CEV	“Why are they allowed to see their children grow up?”
JPS (Tanakh)	Their children are with them always, And they see their children's children.
Keil and Delitzsch	Their posterity is established before them about them, And their offspring before their eyes.
NASB	“Their descendants [lit., seed] are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes.”
The Septuagint	Their seed is according to <i>their</i> desire, and their children are in <i>their</i> sight.
Young's Literal Translation	Their seed is established, Before their face with them, And their offspring before their eyes.

Interestingly enough, Job does not use the word that we commonly find rendered *children* (which is often the English translation of *sons*). We begin with *their seed* (singular) followed by the masculine singular, Niphal participle of *kûwn* (כּוּן) [pronounced *koon*], which means *to erect (to stand up perpendicular), to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized*. In the Niphal (the passive stem), it means *to be firmly established, to be set up, to be established, to be prepared, to be ready*. Strong's #3559 BDB #465. Literally, we have: *His seed is established*; but less literally, this would be: *His dynasty is established*. This refers to the descendants of the rich. Literally, what follows is *to their faces with them*. The phrase *to their faces* means *in their presence, before their faces, in the sight of*. Strong's #6440 BDB #815. This gives us: **Their seed firmly established before their faces with them**. Less literally: **Their dynasty is firmly established in their presence with them**. These are not kids who leave home

²¹ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 349.

and become successful despite their upbringing. These are children who become successful because of their family. They are prospered in the family business. Edsel Ford and Henry Ford II may have been good businessmen in their own right, but they were as successful as they were because they were the son and grandson, respectively, of Henry Ford. Before his eyes, his dynasty was established and prospered. These children with him were established, and before his eyes, they grew prosperous. There are families of actors, who, although their children are no doubt talented in their profession, their careers were given a firm foothold based upon the fact that they were related. Don't misunderstand me—I am not saying that any of this is evil or wrong—nor is Job saying that—he is simply pointing out that this is an established fact, Jack.

Now recall what Zophar has already said in Job 20:5: “Don't you know this from old, that the triumphing of the wicked is short and the joy of the godless is momentary?” And Job clearly responds to Zophar here, saying, “Dude,²² you are so totally wrong.” Or, as Keil and Delitzsch put it: *the ungodly, far from being overtaken by the punishment of the godlessness, continued in the enjoyment of life, that they attain to old age, and also a proportionately increasing power and wealth.*²³

Then we have the wâw conjunction and the masculine plural noun *tse'âtsâ'* (תְּצֵאֵם) [pronounced *tseh-ets-AW*], which means *issue, offspring*. This word is found only in Job and Isaiah and only in the plural. It means *offspring, produce* and comes from the very common verb *to go, to come out* (Strong's #3318 BDB #422). The idea is this is what comes out of the loins of the mother and father, so to speak. The only legitimate plural rendering might be *children*. Strong's #6631 BDB #425. Then we have *to their [two] eyes*, which can also be rendered *before their eyes*. Strong's #none BDB #510. This simply continues the thought, and the verb from the previous line is carried along with the new plural noun. This gives us: *...and their offspring [or, children] [are established] before their eyes*. We see this today. If you are rich and live within a large city, your children go to private or prep schools; they do not mix with the *hoi polloi* in the public schools. That is standard for them. They don't go to the city or state colleges, they go to expensive and often private universities. They might begin at the bottom of their father's company when they begin work, but it is not with the idea that they will remain there. They will begin their employment coterminously with several people at the bottom of their father's company. However, despite the differences which may exist in their ability or work ethic, they children of the rich will advance faster and farther than their contemporaries. There is nothing necessarily immoral about this—it is simply the way things are. In pretty much any society, the children of the privileged are privileged themselves. What is painful for Job in this observation is that he has probably never observed any infidel have his family taken away as Job's was from him.

Job was answering Zophar's assertion from Job 20:28: “The increase of his house will depart; it will flow away in the day of His anger.” Bildad had also stated: “He has no offspring or posterity among his people, nor any survivor where he had temporarily lived.” (Job 18:19). Job's answer: “Their dynasty is firmly established in their presence with them and their offspring [are established] before their eyes.” So there are no absolutes when it comes to those on this earth who stand in opposition to God. *Job...directly controverts [the position of his three associates...[and] says that it is a fact, that so far from being cut off, they [the infidels are often established in the very presence of their ungodly parents, and live and prosper. How, he asks, is this consistent with the position, that God deals with men in this life according to their character?*²⁴

**Their homes safe [and secure] from fear
and no rod of God upon them.**

Job
21:9

**Their homes [are] [secure and] safe from fear
and [there is] no rod of God upon them.**

**Their homes are safe from fear as well as secure
and God's rod of wrath is not upon them.**

This is a fairly simple verse; let's first see what others have done:

²² Actually, the Bible underused the word *dude*.

²³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, pp. 461–462.

²⁴ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 349.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Their houses are at peace without dread, Neither is the rod of God upon them;
JPS (Tanakh)	Their homes are secure, without fear; They do not feel the rod of God.
NASB	"Their houses are safe from fear, Neither is the rod of God on them."
The Septuagint	Their houses are prosperous, neither anywhere fear, neither is there a scourge from the Lord upon them.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Their houses are peace without fear, Nor is a rod of God upon them.

We begin this verse with *their homes* (or, *houses*). There are no verbs in this verse. This usually indicates great emphasis. Then we have the word *shâlôwm* (שׁלֹוֹם) [pronounced *shaw-LOHM*], which means *completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, safe, secure, tranquil, undisturbed, unagitated*. Strong's #7965 BDB #1022. Then we have the preposition *from* and the masculine singular noun (pausal form) of *pachad* (פָּחַד) [pronounced *PAH-khahd*] means *fear, dread, a thing which is feared, that which is feared*. Strong's #6343 BDB #808. Here, Job responds to what Eliphaz had said in Job 15:21: "**Sounds of terror are in his ears, while at peace, the destroyer comes upon him.**" Eliphaz used both *shâlôwm* and *pachad* in that verse. Job uses these two words as well to let Eliphaz know that he is replying not only to what Zophar said, but what to Eliphaz said as well. Job is saying, "Poppycock, Eliphaz. The rich—they are safe and secure in their dwellings—they live apart from fear." Literally, what we have is: "**Their homes [are] safe [and secure] from fear.**" This is also a response to what Zophar had said as well: "**The heavens will reveal his iniquity and the earth will rise up against him. The increase of his house will depart and it will flow away in the day of His anger.**" (Job 20:27–28).

Second line: *wâw* conjunction, negative, and the masculine singular noun *shê^bveṭ* (שֶׁבֶט) [pronounced *SHAYB-veṭ*], which means *rod, staff, club, scepter*. Strong's #7626 BDB #986. This is followed by *of God* (Elohim) and *upon them*. This gives us: "**...and no rod of God [is] upon them.**" "There are rich and successful men who are immoral or amoral and their home are safe and secure, and God's hand is not upon them." is Job's thought. The *rod of God* is generally associated with discipline and the unbeliever is not ever under God's discipline, per se. **For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives** (Heb. 12:6 Prov. 3:12). The unbeliever is not a son of God. He is not subject to discipline. Now, God may deal harshly with the unbeliever who assaults the growing believer, but God does not search out each and every vile unbeliever for discipline. God no more searches out each unbeliever for discipline than we walk onto a playground and pick out the most odious children and discipline them ourselves.

Progressive Revelation and Why Does God Allow the Ungodly to be Successful?

Now, I want you to grasp what is going on here; I have spoken of progressive revelation, which is something that few Christians ever think about and fewer grasp. There is an implication here which is true. God often allows *live and let live* as a part of His program. He does not seek to crush each every immoral person, as all men are sinners and come short of His glory. Those who are not His children are not subject to His discipline. There are too many calls to man by evangelists and quasi evangelists indicating that all they have to do is to come to God, and everything will be wonderful and alright. No, it won't be. When you become a child of God, you are also subject to His discipline. This may seem like a negative, but it is not. Those of you who had strong and strict parents understand the value of having been disciplined; and you have observed your peers who functioned unrestrained, and were unhappy children because there were no limits in their lives. Don't be foolish. Being a child of God, even though it involves discipline, is the choice between good, loving parents or indulgent, self-centered parents whose concept of love is simply giving material things as they can afford them. The child may think that they want the latter, but the young adult prefers the former. Job, when faced with this issue among his peers, has determined that God does not discipline everyone who deserves it. This is what is revealed to Job in all of his pain. There is no proper retribution for man on this earth. God does not discipline or bring into line the unbeliever. He only disciplines His own. Now, it is important to recognize that God disciplines His own children and does not discipline those who are Satan's. There are exceptions to this. When a child of Satan attacks the family of God or God directly, there is more likely a chance that God will attack that person directly. The quickest way for a rich and successful person to lose his wealth and/or health is to attack a member of the family of God. The amoral person who stays out of God's way and does not attack believers may live a relatively

Progressive Revelation and Why Does God Allow the Ungodly to be Successful?

safe and prosperous life. All that stands in that person's way is logical consequences to his actions. Certain actions will cause a reaction. You don't walk into a bar, find the biggest guy there and slap him in the face without consequences. This life is the same way—there are natural laws and consequences and for the typical unbeliever who is not attacking a believer, these are the only things which such a one faces.

Now, God does intrude on the life of the unbeliever from time to time, as He did upon mine many decades ago. Some of us tend to learn the hard way and we will not look up until we are flat on our backs on the ground. God, in His infinite grace, sometimes has to *encourage* us in this way. God sometimes takes the unbeliever and places him in some unenviable position in order to gain that unbeliever's attention. Man often will not turn to God when he is successful and blessed. Sometimes God has to put a little pressure on man in order to get his attention. This is not discipline; it is God reaching out to us. What Job has done has taken some common, but very incorrect notions, and sets the record straight. Job's friends, even though they are self-righteous and judgmental, still represented the advanced theological thinking of their day. Job did not have three infidels as friends, but these were essentially good and righteous men (comparatively speaking). They were not anti-God; they were not anti-morality. But their thinking was incorrect and God used Job to straighten it out. Because this document was recorded, this straightened out the thinking of most people.

I need to add an addendum to this, as I mentioned progressive revelation. Progressive revelation does not mean that, at first, learned believers believed one thing, then God straightened them out via a prophet or a writer of Scripture, and now they believe something totally different. Progressive revelation means that a doctrine or the understanding of a doctrine is limited or possibly even nonexistent. With progressive revelation, this doctrine is brought to light or made more clear. We do not understand everything concerning the final judgment; however, we understand all that we have to (or, I should say, we are given the means to understand the final judgment), and we certainly understand more of the final judgment than did Job; and certainly more than Adam (who was given a basic explanation in Gen. 3:14–19). In other words, progressive revelation does not contradict what has been learned before, but it fills in more details than we had before. Once we had all that we needed (with is the Old and New Testament canons of Scripture), then God no longer had to give us additional revelation.¹

(see also [Why Do the Wicked Continue to Live?](#))

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Barnes: *The truth is, good and evil are intermingled. There is a general course of events by which the wicked are involved in calamity in this life, and the righteous are prospered; but still, there are so many exceptions as to show the necessity of a future state of rewards and punishments. To us, who look to that future world, all is clear. But that view of the future state of retribution was not possessed by Job and his friends.*²⁵ Let me add to this, the reason that evil and arrogance is often, but not always, associated with pain and distress is the natural laws of this life. Just like when you touch the hot burner of a stove, your hand burns; so also, when you engage in various sinful activities, there are real results and payments which are inevitably made. The homosexual or the Lothario may not receive from God any direct punishment; however, this does not mean that their lives will be free of trouble in relation to their predilections. They may suffer from disease; they may have an inability to love unconditionally; they may harden their souls. Often, much of their personal pain and suffering is directly related directly to their sins. Every action has a reaction. You cannot expect to commit certain types of sins and remain unscathed. An easier illustration: you cannot live of life of crime without facing serious consequences for your actions. Obviously, not all criminals are captured and appropriately punished, but many of the painful things which happen to a criminal happen to him because of the crimes which he commits.

²⁵ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 350.

**His bull passes through
and he does not cause [the cow] to loath;
not caused to slip away his cow
and she is not bereaved [i.e., she does not
miscarry].**

Job
21:10

**His bull impregnates
and it does not cause [the cows] to reject
[him].
His cow does not escape
and she does not miscarry.**

**His bulls are virile and are not rejected by the breeding stock.
His cows do not slip away from their mating and they do not miscarry.**

Here is how Owen reads: *His bull breeds and does not cause (the cow) to reject as loathsome calves* [which is a feminine singular, Piel imperfect verb in the Hebrew plus a negative]. His cow and does not cast her calf. Even if we change the word order slightly, we come up with: *His bull breeds and does not cause the cow to reject as loathsome calves* [which is still a verb]. And [she] does not cast her calf [apart from the negative, these are four words which stand for one verb which does not exactly mean *to cast off a calf*]. Whatever. Better see what others have done.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	His bull covereth, and pauseth not aversion, His cow safely calved, and casteth not her young;...
Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	His [the evil-doer's] bull genders and does not fail; His cow calves easily and does not cast [off] her calf.
JPS (Tanakh)	Their bull breeds and does not fail; Their cow calves and never miscarries.
NASB	"His ox mates without fail [lit., and does not fail]; His cow calves and does not abort."
The Septuagint	Their cow does not cast off her calf, and those with young are safe, and do not miscarry.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	His bullock hath eaten corn, and doth not loath, His cow bringeth forth safely, And doth not miscarry.

The idea is fairly clear, but we should examine just what is going on with the vocabulary, which appears as though it is going to be quite specialized. The subject is the masculine singular noun *shôwr* (שׁוֹר) [pronounced *shohr*], which means *an ox, a bull, a head of cattle*. I guess that I should admit to something, as there are areas where I am painfully inadequate—at reading this, I really did not know the difference between an *ox* or a *bull*. Apparently, *oxen* are a family, taking in such groups as domestic cattle, water buffalo, bison, muskoxen, brahman, yak, and banteng.²⁶ Certainly, there are several breeds of cattle as well (Hereford, Brahman, Angus, etc.). Some are bred for milk producing and others are bred for their meat. Strong's #7794 BDB #1004. So, what about them bulls? This is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect of *ʿāḇar* (עָבַר) [pronounced *gaw^p-VAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. It is found well over 500 times in the Bible. In the Piel, one of the meanings has to do with the sperm passing through a impregnating the female. Strong's #5674 BDB #716. This gives us: **His bull passes through**; or, **His bull impregnates**.

The second line begins with the *wâw* conjunction, the negative and the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil Imperfect of *gâʿal* (לָעַל) [pronounced *gaw-GAHL*] and it means *loathe, abhor*; it is a strong term for intense hatred. This is something which has been fouled, soiled and rejected. In the Hiphil, this means *to cause to loath*. Strong's #1602 BDB #171. This gives us: **And he [the bull] will not cause to loath...** It is possible that the rejection here is of the bull himself. The bull is able to impregnate and it does not cause the cows to reject him. According to Keil and Delitzsch, this is two sides of the same coin. The bull of the secularist genders (begets, or, sires calves) and he does not fail in this endeavor.

This is immediately followed again by another verb, the feminine singular, Piel imperfect of *pâlaṭ* (פָּלַט) [pronounced *paw-LAHT*], which means *to be smooth and sleek, and therefore to slip away or to escape*. In the Piel, this can mean *to slip away altogether, to cause to escape*. Strong's #6403 BDB #812. I hope that you can see that this

²⁶ Luckily, I have access to *The World Book Encyclopedia*; ©1983 by World Book, Inc.; Vol. 14, p. 675.

is already kind of messed up. Together, these last few words read: **And he [the bull] will not cause [something] to loathe she will escape [or, slip out]...** Obviously, this is rather difficult to unravel. A reasonable possibility is that Job took a breath, and this verb went with a third line. What follows is the feminine singular noun *pârâh* (פָּרָה) [pronounced *paw-RAW*], which means *heifer, cow*. This is an interesting word found 25 times in Scripture—21 of those times in three chapters (Gen. 32 Num. 19 I Sam. 6). Strong's #6510 BDB #831. *His cow* would seem to be the subject of the previous verb. This is followed by a *wâw* conjunction, a negative and the 3rd person feminine singular, Piel imperfect of *shâkal* (שָׂכַל) [pronounced *shaw-KAHL*], which means *to be bereaved*. Strong's #7921 BDB #1013. *His cow* would also seem to be the subject of that verb. This line would be: **His cow was not caused to slip away and she was not bereaved [i.e., she did not miscarry]**. Keil and Delitzsch present this also as two sides of the same coin: the cow gives birthe asily and does not miscarry.

I realize that I have been beating this to death, however, it is important that we correctly render all passages, and work from there. The idea in this passage is fairly simple—the breeding stock of the infidel is not struck with any strange disease; they breed normally and vigorously. It is exactly as we should expect, if the infidel is an experienced cattle rancher. *God does not interpose by a miracle to cut off their cattle, and to prevent their becoming rich.*²⁷

**They send forth like the flock their little ones
and their children dance.**

Job
21:11

**They send out their little ones like the flock
and their children dance.**

**They allow their little ones to run around as free as their animals
and these children spend their time in play.**

This looks like it will be fairly simple to unravel. Still, let's see what others have done first:

Keil and Delitzsch	They let their little ones run about as a flock, And their children jump about.
JPS (Tanakh)	They let their infants run loose like sheep, And their children skip about.
NASB	"They send forth their little ones like the flock, And their children skip about."
The Septuagint	And they remain as an unfailing flock, and their children play before [them] taking up psaltery and harp;...
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	They send forth as a flock their sucklings, And their children skip.

To explain the Septuagint: the Septuagint mixes the words of the next verse with this verse; so, there is no appreciable difference between the two verses, other than the placement of a few words. We will follow the Hebrew, as there is no pressing reason to do otherwise (although it is certainly possible that v. 11a belongs with v. 10 and v. 11b belongs with v. 12). In either case, the concept is essentially the same and quite easy to grasp: life for the successful infidel is not appreciably different from the life of the successful believer.

Sometimes it's just easier to see it side-by-side than it is to describe it:

The Hebrew vs. the Greek of Job 21:11–12

English Translation from the Hebrew	English Translation from the Greek
They send out their little ones like the flock and their children dance. They lift up [their voices in singing] as a tambourine or lyre; and they rejoice with reference to the sound of an organ.	And they remain as an unfailing flock, and their children play before [them] taking up psaltery and harp and they rejoice at the voice of a song.

²⁷ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 350.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

In the Hebrew, we begin this verse with the 3rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect of *to send, to send forth, to send out*. Then we have the kaph preposition (*like, as*) followed by the feminine singular (with a definite article) of *tsôn* (צֹן) [pronounced *tzohn*], which means *small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks*. This is a collective noun which stands for a group of things. *Flock* is a good translation which conveys that. Strong's #6629 BDB #838. *Flock* is a reference to number, meaning that they had a lot of children (a sign of prosperity and blessing in the ancient world).

Then we have the object of the verb, which is the masculine plural, 3rd person masculine plural suffix of *ʿāvîyl* (אָוִיַל) [pronounced *guh-VEEL*], which means *a young boy*. In the plural, this would mean *young children*. Strong's #5759 & #5960 BDB #732. This gives us: **They send out as the flock their young children**. It appears as though the Septuagint took this to belong with the previous verse, and applied it to the animals belonging to the successful infidel, who simply allowed his flocks to run free. *Their young children*, in the Septuagint, would be applied to the second thought. In the Hebrew, what is occurring is Job is using this as a segue to go from one thought seamlessly to another. He was speaking of the successfulness of the herds of the infidel, and in this verse he speaks of their children as being let out in great freedom, just like the herds. My thinking is that the translators of the Septuagint did not grasp the concept of the segue, and translated in such a way to reveal that lack of understanding.

The next line begins with the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine plural noun (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) of *yeled* (יָלֵד) [pronounced *YEH-led*], which means *child, son, boy, youth*. In the plural, it means *children, descendants*. Strong's #3206 BDB #409. The verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect of *râqad* (רָקַד) [pronounced *raw-KAHD*], which means *to skip about, to leap, to run with leaps and bounds*. This word can refer to a rather dramatic even, e.g. the quaking of Mount Sinai when the Law was given (Psalm 114:4) as well as to the skipping about of children, as we have here. Strong's #7540 BDB #955. The picture is their children playing carefree. Now, this may not really seem like that big of a deal to us; however, the children of any family, in the ancient world, at a very young age, helped out the family—primarily by working. We allow our children to play from ages 1–5 or so; and then allow them a great deal of play time and leniency until about age 18. We don't have that in the ancient world. A child might have important and necessary chores by age 5, his responsibility increasing by the year. Not the children of the rich and successful; these children could do what they wanted to do. They were carefree. They were without responsibilities. They could run free, like the cattle. The families did not require them to work. The rich infidel was quite well-off and his children benefitted by his prosperity.

Barnes: *The image is one simply of health, abundance, exuberance of feeling, cheerfulness, prosperity. The houses were free from alarms; the fields were filled with herds and flocks, and their families of happy and playful children were around them. The object of Job was not to say that all this was in itself wrong, but that it was a plain matter of fact that God did not take away the comforts of all the wicked and overwhelm them with calamity...There is not a more lovely picture of happiness and of the benevolence of God any where on earth than in such groups of children, and in their sportiveness and playfulness there is no more that is wrong than there is in the gambols of the lambs of the flock.*²⁸

**They lift up as a tambourine and lyre
and they rejoice to a sound of an pipe.**

Job
21:12

**They lift up [their voices in singing] as a
tambourine or lyre;
and they rejoice with reference to the sound
of an pipe.**

**They lift up their voices in singing, as a musical instrument
and they rejoice like the sound of an pipe.**

²⁸ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 350. By the way, *gambol* means *skipping about, dancing, playing, frolic*. You're welcome.

We continue with the prosperity, and here it comes in the context of the children, but could very likely be the context of the adults. Here are what others have done with this verse:

Dr. Good	They rise up to the tabor and harp, and trip merrily to the sound of the pipe.
Keil and Delitzsch	They raise their voice with the playing of timbrel and harp, And rejoice at the sound of the pipe.
JPS (Tanakh)	They sing to the music of timbrel and lute, And revel to the tune of the pipe.
NASB	“They sing [lit., <i>lifted up the voice</i>] to the timbrel and harp And rejoice at the sound of the flute.”
The Septuagint	...and they rejoice at the voice of a song.
Young’s Literal Translation	They lift <i>themselves</i> up at the timbrel and harp, And rejoice at the sound of an organ.

We begin this verse with the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *nâsâ’* (נָסְאוּ) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], (we had this verb back in v. 3 as well). It generally means *to lift up, to bear, to carry*. It has several different specific Qal meanings, most of which have to do with lifting something up (which can include one’s voice or a musical instrument, which is the sense here). Whether you lift up your voice or lift up a shovel still gives the same basic meaning for *nâsâ’*; however, it is the connotation which is important. Here, lifting up the voice to sing or lifting up an instrument is all the same thing—it has to do with rejoicing and with happiness, as well as it indicates that there is some leisure time in the person’s life who is singing or playing an instrument. Strong’s #5375 (and Strong’s #4984) BDB #669. This is followed by the kaph preposition kaph or k^e (כּ) [pronounced *k^e*], which means *like, as, often, when, as soon as*. Strong’s #none BDB #453. Then we have the masculine singular noun *tôph* (תוף) [pronounced *tohf*], which means *timbrel, tambourine*; it is generally held in the hand of a dancing woman. Strong’s #8596 BDB #1074. Then we have the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine singular noun *kînnôwr* (כִּנּוֹר) [pronounced *kin-NOHR*], which means *lyre*. Strong’s #3658 BDB #490. It is not exactly clear here whether they are lifting up their voices (or their spirits or whatever) *like* musical instruments and singing or if they are lifting up something *while* the instruments are in use. Even the most literal translations do not use the kaph preposition. Rotherham explains this problem for us, after giving his rendering: **They rejoice aloud as [with] timbrel and lyre, And make merry to the sound of the pipe;...** He footnotes the *as*, letting us know that several manuscripts as well as three early printed editions have a *bêyth* (ב) here rather than a kaph (כ). You will note how similar these prepositions are. Here, it would make most sense for then to lift up *with* (*bêyth*) the musical instruments. The implication is, of course, that they are lifting up their voices and spirits with the musical instruments, although we do not find the words *voices* or *spirits* here. However, if we are to accept that is what they are doing (i.e., *lifting up their voices and spirits in song*), then *as* also makes reasonable sense here. In fact, what would make the most sense is for their to be the sign of the direct object here, so they are *lifting up* these instruments. In any case, there is rejoicing, happiness and spare time. It is unclear whether this applies to the children of the previous verse or to the adults of the previous verse (or to both of these groups of people). Literally, we have: **They lift up as a tambourine and a lyre.**

In the second line, we have the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *sâmach* (נִשְׂמְחוּ) [pronounced *saw-MAHKKH*], and it means *to rejoice, to be glad*. Strong’s #8055 BDB #970. This is followed by the *lâmed* preposition (*to, for, with reference to*) and the masculine singular construct of *qôwl* (קוֹל) [pronounced *kohl*], which means *sound, voice*. Strong’s #6963 BDB #876. The masculine singular that it is affixed to is *’ûwgâ^bv* (עוּגָבָה) [pronounced *goo-GAW^bV*], which is given several translations (*tibia, fistula, syrinx, pipe, reed, flute, organ*). Given this name due to its sensual or appealing tones. It is probably related to the word *to blow*, which could indicate something similar to a woodwind or horn instrument; however, this *blowing* could also be similar to the air being pumped through pipes as an organ functions. Barnes reasonably reject the organ as being too recent a musical instrument to be found in the days of Job; and adds that even if such an instrument existed, it would be unlikely used in a family gathering.²⁹ Certainly, given its derivation, it was some sort of a wind instrument. Strong’s #5748 BDB #721. This gives us: **And they rejoice with reference to [the] sound of an pipe.** Although we might have questions and disagreements as to which musical instruments are found here, the general spirit of family gaiety is clear.

²⁹ Barnes’ Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 351.

It appears as though we are speaking of both the children and the successful infidels, and they spend some portion of their lives in celebration. Let me give you a contemporary example: Hugh Hefner spent a great deal of time in his mansion or at his clubs in celebration—perhaps not with his children or grand children, but with women young enough to be. This is an example of the rich and the successful enjoying their time here on this earth. McGee: *They may have a whole flock of children. They dance and are gay and they rejoice. They have a good time and they live it up. You may say that their fall is going to be apparent, but you are mistaken. Like others they go down to the grave but without catastrophe striking them beforehand.* McGee goes on: *Job had been a rancher and he points out that some of the wicked people are very prosperous cattlemen and they have big prosperous families. I can remember when I was a boy in West Texas that some of the biggest drunkards in the neighborhood were also the biggest ranchers in the area. Where are they today? They are gone. Their sons apparently are following right in their footsteps, and they are going to disappear also. But they do prosper. Job calls attention to that.*³⁰ David observed the same thing: **I have seen a violent, wicked man spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil** (Psalm 37:3). And there is nothing wrong with what Job observes here. There is no insinuation that some sort of sins are being committed or anything like that. This is just a very well-off family enjoying themselves and their prosperity. Job drives home the point that such a thing exists and his three companions damn well know it.

I guess that we should look at this from the other side as well. Job is not saying that those who are wealthy are always happy and have no problems. That is absolutely incorrect. Your problems do not automatically decrease with a substantial income or savings. In the litigious society that we live in, there are hundreds of people in your periphery who would be more than willing to legally steal your money from you in court, had they but a reason to do so. It happens all of the time. I recall listening to the news and hearing about a tragic drowning in the swimming pool of a celebrity; after sketchy details of the actual drowning were given, I knew exactly what I would hear next: sketchy details about a lawsuit against that celebrity. The child had not even been buried and already the family had consulted an attorney to sue the celebrity. In retrospect, **every** accident can be prevented. At the party mentioned, there were perhaps ten people who could have, in some way or another, prevented the tragedy. Who will pay for it? Whoever has deep pockets, and if your pockets are deep enough, they will go after what your insurance will pay and then they will go after you. So if you have money and find yourself in an accident with someone else, if they can conceivably determine that you could have prevented the accident, you will be sued. Will the suit prevent future accidents? Certainly not. Will it prevent you from every being involved in an accident? No. Will it prevent you from being sued again? No. Does it teach a lesson to someone? No. Does it mollify the pain of the *injured party*? Not really. What it does do is it transfers much of your bank account into their bank account and into the account of your respective lawyers.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Job Makes it Clear That We Are Speaking about Unbelievers

**They complete in the prosperity their days;
and, in a moment, [to] Sheol [i.e., (the) grave]
they go down.**

Job
21:13

**They complete their days in prosperity
and in a moment they descend into the grave.**

**They come to the end of their prosperous life on earth,
and then suddenly they descend into Sheol [the grave].**

What we have here what superficially appears to be the ultimate retribution, which all infidels, successful or unsuccessful, can hope expect. However, it is not really that. Job and his friends believe him to be on his deathbed. However, he is suffering a great deal prior to this death. On the other hand, the successful infidel often just drops dead, just like that, in a moment. The other translations first:

³⁰ J. Vernon McGee; *Job*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1977; p. 120.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	They complete [written, wear out; read, complete] ³¹ in prosperity their days, And <in a moment to hades> they sink down.
Keil and Delitzsch	They enjoy their days in prosperity, And in a moment they go down to Shehōl.
JPS (Tanakh)	They spend their days in happiness And go down to Sheol in peace.
NASB	“They spend their days in prosperity, And suddenly they go down to Sheol. [this is as is per most versions; MT: ...are shattered by Sheol]
NIV	They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave [Hebrew <i>sheol</i>] in peace [or, in an instant].
NKJV	They spend their days in wealth, And in a moment [or, without lingering] go down to the grave [or, Sheol].
Scofield KJV	They spend their days in wealth [or, in mirth; or, in good], and in a moment go down to sheol.
The Septuagint	They spend their days in wealth, and fall asleep in the rest of the grave.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	They wear out in good their days, And in a moment to Sheol go down.

We begin with the 3rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect of *bâlâh* (הִלָּךְ) [pronounced *baw-LAW*] means to *become completely and fully used up*. Strong's #1086 BDB #115. There is a disagreement as to what verb belongs here. In one early printed edition, as well as in the Aramaic, Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate codices, we have the word *complete*. The Hebrew word is *kâlâh* (הִלָּךְ) [pronounced *kaw-LAWH*], and you will duly note the difference between the two words is *bêyth* vs. *kaph* (again). This means to *complete, to finish, to accomplish, to be fulfilled*. Piel meanings: *to complete, to bring an end to, to finish*. Strong's #3615 BDB #477. This is followed by *in the* and the masculine singular noun *ṭûwḇ* (טוֹב) [pronounced *tooḇ*], which means *good things, goodness, prosperity, well-being, beauty*. The Latin used here is *bonis* and the Greek is *agathoîs* (ἀγαθοῖς), both of which mean *good*. Strong's #2898 BDB #375. Then we have *their days*, giving us: **They complete their days in good**. We may want to put this spin on it: **They complete their days in prosperity**.

The second line begin with the standard *wâw* conjunction, the *bêyth* preposition and the masculine singular noun *rega* (רֵגַע) [pronounced *REH-gahg*], and it means *moment*. Strong's #7281 BDB #921. This is followed by *Sheol* and the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *nâchath* (נָחַת) [pronounced *naw-KHAHTH*], which means *to go down, to descend*. Strong's #5181 BDB #639. This gives us: **And in a moment, they descend [into] Sheol**. Job is not speaking of any eternal retribution here; he is simply stating the fact that some rich and successful infidels often just drop dead, in a moment. This is in contrast to his prolonged suffering (soon after which Job hopes for death). Job is simply continuing in the same vein. There is no corresponding punishment here on earth for the wicked. What I will not launch out on at this point is the end of the wicked at death—where they go and the punishment that they endure for not believing in Christ. This is not the issue being discussed by Job and his friends. Job mentions at as a natural period at the end of this particular thought, but not as a point to be taken up and run with.

We first encountered *Sh^ol* in Job 7:9 where we understood it to refer to the grave or to the underworld holding cell for all who have died. The later use is the more technical one, the former is the less technical meaning. There is no reason to assume that Job is using this in the technical sense. He does not speak of an afterlife; he does not speak of an existence in paradise or in hell (given the time frame for Job, this is likely beyond what God had revealed to them for his time period). Therefore, even though there is a technical sense in which the proper noun *Sh^ol* can be used, that is not the way Job is using it here. Here, it simply means *grave*.

Barnes: *The idea is, that when they die they are not afflicted with lingering disease, and great bodily pain, but having lived to an old age in the midst of comforts, they drop off suddenly and quietly, and sleep in the grave. God gives them prosperity while they live, and when they come to die, He does not come forth with the severe expressions of His displeasure, and oppress them with long and lingering sickness.*³² The author of the 73rd Psalm expresses

³¹ However, in one early printed edition, in the Aramaic, the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate, it is both written and read *complete*.

³² *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 351.

the same thoughts in vv.3–4: **For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked; for there are no pains in their death and their body is fat.** We will examine this psalm in great detail after this chapter of Job. Barnes continues: *All that Job says here is predicated on the supposition that such a sudden removal is preferable to death accompanied with long and lingering illness. The idea is, that it is in itself desirable to live in tranquility; to reach an honourable old age surrounded by children and friends, and then quietly and suddenly to drop into the grave without being a burden to friends. The wicked, he says, often live such a life, and he infers, therefore, that it is not a fact that God deals with men according to their character in this life, and that it is not right to draw an inference respecting their moral character from His dealings with them in this world. There are instances enough occurring in every age like those supposed here by Job, to justify the conclusion which he draws.*³³

And so they say to the God, 'Depart from us and knowledge of Your ways we do not desire.

Job
21:14

Furthermore, they say to God, 'Depart from us; we do not [even] desire knowledge of Your ways.

Furthermore, they say to God, 'Leave us alone; we have zero interest in Your ways.

Let's first see what others have done with this:

JPS (Tanakh)

They say to God, "Leave us alone, We do not want to learn Your ways,..."

KJV

Therefore, they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

NASB

"And they say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Thy ways.' "

NKJV

Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways.

The Septuagint

Yet he says to the Lord, "Depart from me; I desire not to know Your ways."

Young's Literal Translation

And they say to God, 'Turn aside from us, And the knowledge of Thy ways We have not desired.'

Both the KJV and the NKJV gives us the wrong impression with regards to the logical progression of Job's speech. *Therefore*, as found in the KJV, indicates that their telling God to depart from them was a result or consequence of their lifestyle. The NKJV uses the connective *yet*, which implies, *despite the fact that they have died, they still say to God, 'Depart from us.'* Neither inference is actually correct (although the NKJV is a bit closer to the true understanding of this passage). The conjunction is the simple *wāw* consecutive, which means *and then, and so, so, then*. *Furthermore* might even be a reasonable rendering in some instances. The idea is that, they are in prosperity; all in their lives are good, and, *furthermore*, they continually reject God in all of this. This stands in stark contrast to the position of Job's friends. A person who is in prosperity should enjoy a good relationship with God; and a person who is on positive signals toward God should likewise enjoy prosperity at the hand of God. These things should go hand-in-hand, yet Job is pointing out a situation (actually, many situations) where they do not. Bear in mind, Job is, in this chapter, thrashing the arguments and position of his associates.³⁴

Why did I spend all of that time on the words *therefore* and *yet*? What happens is that, because of the misinterpretation of a simple connective, a misapplication could be made. Someone could, after reading through Job's argument, conclude that prosperity and Godliness are mutually exclusive (which is the opposite conclusion of his associates). This is not the case. If believers were not allowed to be prosperous, a church would not be supported financially. Any church building or church property requires capital; and the maintenance of said buildings require capital. Although it is the responsibility of the entire congregation to give, there must be some moderate prosperity somewhere in that congregation which actually supports the church financially. God certainly

³³ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 352.

³⁴ Much of this was inspired by *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 352.

allows some heathen prosperity, and He also allows some believers financial prosperity. I say this so that you do not misinterpret and therefore misapply the meaning of this passage.

Therefore, this verse begins literally: **And so they speak to the God...** *Speak* is in the Qal imperfect, which indicates incomplete, continuous and/or ongoing action. They did not express negative volition toward God once or twice; for their entire existence, they told God this. When speaking to anyone, there are two prepositions used: *lâmed* (to) and *ʿel* (unto); the latter seems to be the one which connotes respect and deference. When addressing God, they do not even show common deference and respect. They address God with the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative of *çûwr* (רָס) [pronounced *soor*], which means *to turn aside, to depart, to go away*. Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693. This is followed by *from us*, giving us: **“And so they say to the God, ‘Depart from us.’”** We are not speaking of their life after death, but of their life during their life. Telling God that you are not interested in what He is selling—this is not something which is of recent invention. This attitude has been around for a long time. Using my illustration from before—do you think that Hugh Hefner desires to know God? He has no reason to, in his own mind. He enjoys great wealth and can live a life of hedonism essentially unfettered by anything other than health or life. For the hedonistic unbeliever, they cannot hope for much better than that from this life. Approaching God as He is could potentially change this lifestyle, a sacrifice a hedonist would certainly not want to risk.

A minor point of interpretation: the typical unbeliever does not drop everything that he is doing from time to time, and look toward heaven and say, “Depart from me, God.” This is not what Job is saying. The lifestyle of such a one is what is in view in this verse. Their very lifestyle and attitude says to God, “Depart from me.” They do not have to ever think about God in order for Job’s point to be made. The only thinking that they might do concerning God is a rationalization as to why God does not exist; or that His existence is questionable; or that they have no reason to be concerned with that which they cannot see. In other words, the unbelievers to whom Job refers here are not physically saying the words that Job uses here; their lifestyle and focus of their lives belies this *attitude*.³⁵

In the second line, we have the *wâw* conjunction and the feminine singular construct of *da ʿath* (דָּאֵת) [pronounced *DAH-ğahth*] means *knowledge*. Strong’s #1847 BDB #395. This is affixed to *Your ways*, which is followed by the negative and the 1st person plural, Qal perfect of *châphêts* (חָפַעְתִּים) [pronounced *khaw-FATES*], which means *to will, to desire*. Strong’s #2654 BDB #342.

Job is describing the successful infidel whose only initiated contact with God is to tell Him that they have no interest in Him and no interest in His plan, or to replay such a lack of interest as to not even mention Him at all. These are the very men who live a life of luxury and then die quickly and painlessly. Barnes: *What higher proof of depravity can there be, than that a man has no desire to know anything about a pure and holy God; no pleasure in becoming acquainted with his Maker!*³⁶

Interpretation is everything. Job, in the next verse, is not going to rhetorically ask, “What is God that we should serve Him?” What he does is continue with the *quote* of the successful infidel:

<p>‘What [is the] Almighty that we serve Him? And what profit that we encounter in Him?’</p>	<p>Job 21:15</p>	<p>‘What [is] the Almighty that we [should] serve Him? And what profit [is it] that we should make entreaty to Him?’</p>
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**‘Just who is the Almighty that we should serve Him?
What profit is it to us that we should make our peace with Him?’**

³⁵ Also inspired by *Barnes’ Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 352.

³⁶ *Barnes’ Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 352.

Notice that the successful heathen is no longer speaking to God but to whomever is interested in listening to him. He justifies his position in this verse. Also, just as we examined in the previous verse, this does not have to be explicitly stated (although it is more likely that such a heathen would actually say these things when discussing his views with a believer). First, how others have translated this:

JPS (Tanakh)	What is Shaddai that we should serve Him? What will we gain by praying to Him?"
NASB	'Who [lit., <i>Whaf</i>] is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, And what would we gain if we entreat Him?'
The Septuagint	'What is the Mighty One, that we should serve him? And what profit is there that we should approach him?'
Young's Literal Translation	What is the Mighty One that we serve Him? And what do we profit when we meet with Him?'

Interestingly enough, we begin this verse with *What* rather than *Who*. The interrogative is *mâh* (מַה) [pronounced *maw*], which means *what, how, why*. Apparently the Latin equivalent is *quid*, as in *quid pro quo*. Strong's #4100 BDB #552. In the Hebrew, *who* is *mîy*³⁷ (מִי) [pronounced *mee*]. Strong's #4310 BDB #566. What's the point? The use of *mâh* as opposed to *mîy* is a very impersonal interrogative. They do not even look upon God as a Living Being—they look upon Him as a concept or an idea—an idea which they find irrelevant to their lives.

Then we have the proper noun *shadday* (שַׁדַּי) [pronounced *shahd-DAH-ee*], which is generally translated *Almighty, the Almighty One*. Strong's #7706 BDB #994. This is followed by the explanatory conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. This is followed by the 1st person plural, Qal imperfect, with a 3rd person masculine singular suffix, of *ʿâvad* (עָבַד) [pronounced *gaw^h-VAHD*], which means *to work, to serve, to labor*. Strong's #5647 BDB #712. This gives us: "[What \[is the\] Almighty that we \[should\] serve Him?](#)" The use of *mâh* also implies the question *why?* Why should they serve the Almighty? What importance is He to their lives? This is a common feeling among those who are successful and unbelieving. The infidel often has to be beat down in order to realize his need for God. I can personally testify to that. I had to hit bottom in order to recognize my need for a relationship with God. I did not become a believer immediately at bottom and realizing that I was there; but that is where I expressed sincere positive volition. Sometime later, I received and understood the gospel of Christ Jesus. When we are placed under this sort of pressure, it is not discipline, but encouragement for us to look toward Him. Some of us learn the hard way and some of us learn the easy way. When the unbeliever is successful, they see no need to believe in Jesus, because all that they see is taken care of.

Barnes: *The meaning here is, "What claim has the Almighty, or who is He, that we should be bound to obey and worship Him? What authority has He over us? Why should we yield our will to His, and why submit to His claims?" This is the language of the human heart everywhere. Man seeks to deny the authority of God over him, and to feel that he has no claim to his service. He desires to be independent. He would cast off the claims of God. Forgetful that He made, and that He sustains him; regardless of His infinite perfections and of the fact that he is dependent on him every moment, he asks with contempt, what right God has to set up a dominion over him. Such a man—creature of a day—dependent for every breath he draws on that Great Being, whose government and authority he so contemptuously disown and rejects.*³⁸

In the second line, we begin with the *wâw* conjunction, the interrogative *mâh* again, and the 1st person plural, Hiphil imperfect of *yâ'al* (אָל) [pronounced *yaw-GAHL*], which means *to profit, to avail, to benefit*. Strong's #3276 BDB #418. [And what do we profit?](#) Again we have the *kîy* conjunction and the 1st person plural, Qal imperfect of *pâga'* (פָּגַע) [pronounced *paw-GAHG*], which means *to fall upon, to meet, to encounter, to reach* in the Qal and *to cause to light upon, to make entreaty, to interpose*. Although this word can imply violence, it does not necessarily do so. Strong's #6293 BDB #803. This is followed by the *bêyth* preposition and the 3rd masculine singular suffix. This particular verb is often followed by the *bêyth* preposition and it does not necessarily imply a violent

³⁷ This could certainly be a good opening for an Abbot and Costello bit, but I will pass.

³⁸ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 352–353. I changed some of the capitalization.

confrontation or lack thereof. It can mean *to meet with [someone]* or *to reach to [someone]*. [And what do we profit that we \[should\] make entreaty to Him?](#) It is quite simple to understand—they see no reason whatsoever why they should pursue any sort of a relationship with God. Their life is good.

Why Should We Pray to God?

Barnes: *What advantage would it be to us should we worship Him? Men still ask this question, or, if not openly asked, they feel the force of it in their hearts. Learn hence, (1.) That wicked men are influenced by a regard to self in the inquiry about God, and in meeting His claims,. They do not ask what is right, but what advantage will accrue to them. (2.) If they see no immediate benefit arising from worshiping God, they will not do it. Multitudes abstain from prayer, and from the house of God, because they cannot see how their self-interest would be promoted by it. (3.) Men ought to serve God, without respect to the immediate, selfish, and personal good that may follow to themselves. It is a good in itself to worship God. It is what is right; what the conscience says ought to be done; yet, (4.) It is not difficult to answer the question which the sinner puts. There is an advantage in calling upon God. There is (a) the possibility of obtaining the pardon of sin by prayer—an immense and unspeakable “profit” to a dying and guilty man; (b) a peace which this world cannot furnish—worth more than all that it costs to obtain it; (c) support in trial in answer to prayer—in a world of suffering of more value than silver and gold; (d) the salvation of friends in answer to prayer—an object that should be one of intense interest to those who love their friends; (e) eternal life—the “profit” of which who can estimate? What are the few sacrifices which religion requires, compared with the infinite and immortal blessings which may be obtained by asking for them? ‘Profit!’ What can be done by man that will be turned to so good an account as to pray? Where can man make so good an investment of time and strength as by calling on God to say his soul, and to bless his friends and the world? ²*

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

It appears that such a one, *because* of his very successful and prosperous life, has turned away from God. A reasonable question of application would be: *Why, then, doesn't God take everyone to rock bottom so that they will believe in Him?* Not everyone, at rock bottom, will turn to God. Why we choose or do not choose to believe in God—to desire a relationship with Him—I really can't answer. But some people, regardless of the pressure that they are placed under will not believe in Jesus Christ. Now, under great pressure, they might call out to God and they might beg Him for another chance of some sort—they might even make great promises and vows to Him; but when it comes down to brass tacks—believing in Christ Jesus—that is a step that some will not take, no matter where they find themselves. For that reason, there is no reason for God to put the screws to an unbeliever who is negative toward Him and will remain negative toward Him. A object lesson of this is found in the Pharaoh of Egypt who opposed Moses taking the children of Israel out of Egypt (recall that this had not yet happened in time). Moses went to Pharaoh and said to him, [“Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, ‘Let My people go.’ ”](#) (Ex. 5:1b); and Pharaoh responded with, [“Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know Jehovah.”](#) (Ex. 5:2b). Pharaoh was the epitome of success; he was rich, learned, and considered himself to be the most powerful man on earth (which he probably was). And now Moses comes to him and says, “I'm with Israel and we're leaving, because this is God's plan for us.” Pharaoh isn't buying that. And he has no real interest in Who or What God is.

Israel will express this same negative volition towards God prior to the four century period between the testaments. [“It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before Jehovah of the armies?”](#) (Mal. 3:14b). Given God's silence with regards to Israel during that time period, this seems to have been the general attitude of Israel. Even the religious types (the scribes and the pharisees) remade God in their own image.

[Behold not in their hand their good;
\[the\] counsel of wicked ones is far from me.](#)

Job
21:16

[Listen, their prosperity is not in their hand;
\(the thinking of the lawless is far from me\).](#)

**Listen carefully: the prosperity of the wicked is not their own doing
(and the reasoning of the lawless is an educated guess on my part).**

McGee: *They are godless. They don't want God. They insultingly say that they don't need God nor desire to know His ways. What could God give to them that they can't get for themselves?*³⁹

Job finishes the quote and makes some other points. First, let's see what others have done with this.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Lo! <not in their own hand> is their welfare, The counsel of lawless men is far from me!
<i>God's Word™</i>	Anyhow, isn't their happiness in their own power? (The plan of the wicked is foreign to my way of thinking.)
JPS (Tanakh)	Their happiness is not their own doing. (The thoughts of the wicked are beyond me!)
Keil and Delitzsch	Lo! They have not their prosperity by their own hand, The thought of the wicked be far from me!
NASB	"Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me."
NEB	Is not the prosperity of the wicked in their own hands? Are not their purposes very different from God's? [God's is the probable reading; mine is the Hebrew]
NIV	But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.
NKJV	Indeed their prosperity [lit., <i>their goal</i>] is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me.
NLT	But their prosperity is not of their own doing, so I will have nothing to do with that kind of thinking.
NRSV	Is not their prosperity indeed their own achievement [Heb., <i>in their hand</i>]? The plans of the wicked are repugnant to me.
Owen's Translation	Behold, not in their hand their prosperity. The counsel of the wicked is far from me.
The Septuagint	For their good things were in <i>their</i> hands, but he regards not the works of the ungodly.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Lo, not in their hand is their good, (The counsel of the wicked Hath been far from me.).

You will note that the more difficult the verse (or the more that is packed into a verse), the more translations I quote from. This is a bit difficult to unravel and to understand. Now, the first line is actually fairly easy. We begin with the interjection *hên* (הֵן) [pronounced *hayn*], which means *lo!, behold, observe, look, look here, get this, listen, listen up*. Strong's #2005 BDB #243. The purpose of this word is to end the *quote* of the wicked, and call the attention of the crowd to the fact that Job is now speaking directly from his own reasoning. Job grabs them by the shirt collar and says, "Now, listen to me, dammit!"

Then we have the negative and the phrase *in their hand*, which is followed by the masculine singular noun *ṭûw^bv*, which we had also back in v. 13. *Tûw^bv* (טוֹב) [pronounced *too^bv*] means *good things, goodness, prosperity, well-being, beauty*. Strong's #2898 BDB #375. This gives us: **Listen, not in their hand [is] their prosperity.** In other words, they might believe that they have been the determining factor when it comes to their prosperity, but in all actuality, their prosperity emanates from God. Now, this is an interesting thought, which I don't know that I am ready to go out on a limb and state. Bear in mind, first of all, that this is simply Job speaking—we cannot attribute divine truth to his every word. However, what he tends to say is often true. What he is stating here is that the prosperity enjoyed by the wicked is not truly a result of their doing, but (and this is implied) it is from God. Now, realize that the implications are this: God does not discipline the unbeliever but God does bless some unbelievers. That is what Job is saying. Now, whether this is simply that God has provided them the ability and opportunity to

³⁹ J. Vernon McGee; *Job*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1977; p. 121.

prosper via the economic laws of free enterprise, or whether God has a direct hand in the prospering of all unbelievers who prosper, I am not ready to say. But that certainly appears to be the implication of what Job is saying here. What I have given here is the more common view of this line.

Other commentators (Barnes, Schultens, Rosenmüller and Noyes) have put a slightly different spin on this line: Job's associates have said that, in the case of the prosperous infidel (thinking about Job, of course), that his hold on wealth and prosperity is tenuous at best. At any time, God could and would knock this wealth out of their hands. So what Job is saying is to be understood ironically: "You say that their good is not in their hand?! You say that they do not long enjoy their prosperity? You say that they are soon overwhelmed with calamity? How often have I seen it to be otherwise! How often they continue to enjoy their prosperity, and they live and die in peace." Barnes: *Job is replying to the arguments which they had advanced, and one of those was, that whatever prosperity they had was not at all secure, but that in a moment it might be, and often was, wrested from them. Job maintains the contrary, and affirms that it was a somewhat unusual occurrence...that the wicked were plunged into sudden calamity.*⁴⁰

The second line appears to be the more difficult of the two; however, the Hebrew is actually relatively easy. We begin with the feminine singular construct of ʿêtsâh (אֶצְחָה) [pronounced *gay-TZAW*], which means *counsel, advice, wisdom, purpose*. Strong's #6098 BDB #420. This is followed by the masculine plural adjective (used as a substantive) rāshâʿ (רָשָׁעִים) again (this was from v. 7 of this chapter). Rāshâʿ (רָשָׁעִים) [pronounced *raw-SHAWG*] means *malevolent ones, lawless ones, corrupt ones, criminals*. Strong's #7563 BDB #957. The verb is the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of rāchaq (רָחַקָה) [pronounced *raw-KHAHK*] means *to become far, to become distant, to be distant, to move a far off from, to abstain from, to send far away*. Strong's #7368 BDB #934. This is followed by *from me*. This gives us: [\[The\] counsel of lawless ones is distant from me](#). This is a colloquialism which seems to mean that Job is guessing as to their thinking and all this is by way of supposition on his part. In vv. 14–15, Job quoted the thinking of the successful infidel. Job is thinking that this is their thinking, not being directly privy to it himself. This is why we find this as a parenthetical statement in God's Word™, the JPS and in Young's Literal Translation. The idea is, "Listen, they take the credit for their prosperity and are consumed by that (I am assuming that this is their train of thought on these matters, as this is outside my realm of personal experience)."

Barnes gives this a somewhat different twist (he is quoting Job): "Do not misunderstand me. I maintain that the wicked are often prospered, and that God does not in this life deal with them according to their deserts. They have life, and health, and property. But do not suppose that I am their advocate. Far be it from me to defend them. Far from me be their counsels and their plans. I have no sympathy with them. But I maintain merely that your position is not correct that they are always subjected to calamity, and that the character of men can always be known by the dealings of Providence towards them." Or...[this line might] mean that he was not disposed to be united with them. They were, in fact, prospered; but though they were prospered, he wished to have no part in their plans and counsels. He would prefer a holy life with all the ills that might attend it.⁴¹

The NIV Study Bible gives a slightly different interpretation: *Job disavows the unholy counsel fo the wicked and knows that God is in control...but such knowledge makes God all the more of an enigma to him.*⁴²

The interpretation that Keil and Delitzsch give to this is that v. 16a ("Listen, their prosperity is not in their hand [i.e., under their control.]) is Job's judgment or assessment of the situation, and v. 16b ("The counsel of the lawless ones is distant from me.") is the moral effect which this produces upon him. Their gain and their prosperity is not of their own work, but is a gracious gift from God, the very God Whom they deny. *That God grants them such great and*

⁴⁰ Paraphrased from *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 353. Although this is a reasonable interpretation, I stand by my original interpretation of this line. Job will answer the objections noted in the following verses.

⁴¹ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 353–3544.

⁴² *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 748.

lasting prosperity, is just the mystery which Job is not able to bring forth to view, without, however, his abhorrence of this denying of God being in the slightest degree lessened thereby.⁴³

McGee: Job is saying, "I don't belong in that class. I am not one of the wicked. What you lay down as an inevitable truth does not always work out to be true. Besides, even if it were true, it does not apply to me!"⁴⁴

In any case, Eliphaz, in his response to Job, and his third speech, quotes Job exactly in Job 22:18: "Yet He filled their houses with good. But the counsel of the wicked is far from me." So however, it was understood, Eliphaz used it as a statement that he could mock.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

The Rich Do Not Suffer Certain Retribution Here on this Earth

As the how a lamp of wicked ones is extinguished and comes upon them their calamity— pains He apportions in His nostril [or, *anger*].

Job
21:17

[Just] how often is the lamp of the corrupt extinguished?
And [just how often] does their misfortune come upon them?
[and just how often] does He apportion [intense] pain in His anger.

Exactly how often is the lamp of the ungodly extinguished?
And, really, just how often does misfortune befall them?
How often does God apportion them severe pain in His anger?

This is also a difficult verse, at least on the surface. Here is what others have done with it:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	How oft [i.e., <i>how seldom</i>] the lamp of the lawless goeth out, And their calamity cometh upon them , <Sorrows> apportioneth he in his anger;...
<i>God's Word™</i>	"How often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out? How often does disaster happen to them? How often does an angry God give them pain?"
JPS (Tanakh)	How seldom does the lamp of the wicked fail, Does the calamity they deserve befall them, Does He apportion [their] lot in anger!
Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	How rarely is the light of the wicked put out, And their calamity breaks in upon them, That He distributes snares in His wrath.
NASB	"How often is the lamp of the wicked put out, Or <i>does</i> their calamity fall on them? Does God [lit., <i>He</i>] apportion destruction in His anger?"
NIV	"Yet how often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out? How often does calamity come upon them, the fate God allots in his anger?"
The Septuagint	Nevertheless, the lamp of the ungodly also shall be put out, and destruction will come upon them and pangs of vengeance will seize them.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	How oft is the lamp of the wicked extinguished, and come on them doth their calamity? Pangs He apportioneth in His anger.

The first couple of words are somewhat problematic. We have the kaph preposition, the definite article and the interrogative m^āh, giving us kamm^āh (הַ מַּה) [pronounced *kahm-maw*]. Together they mean *how often, how long, how much, how many years, for how long*. The context here seems to indicate that Job's answer to this question is *not really that often*; hence, several rendered this *how seldom, yet how often*. The words themselves do not

⁴³ Quoted and paraphrased from Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, p. 464.

⁴⁴ J. Vernon McGee; *Job*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1977; p. 121.

necessarily have that connotation, however, as Psalm 78:40, which has the exact same construction and words, emphasizes *how often* Israel rebelled against God in the desert wilderness (in both instances, they are even followed by verbs in the imperfect tense). Strong's #4100 it's on BDB #554. Keil and Delitzsch apply this to all three parts of this verse and to the two parts of the next as well. This is followed by the masculine singular construct of *nêr* (נֵר) [pronounced *nair*], which means *lamp*. Strong's #5216 BDB #632. Then we have the masculine plural adjective of the often used adjective *wicked ones, corrupt ones* (Job uses this word four times in this one chapter alone). The main verb for the first line is next; it is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *dâ 'akê* (דָּאָךְ) [pronounced *daw-ĠAHK*], and it means *to go out, to be extinguished* when speaking of a lamp. This verb is found in the book of Job four of the nine times it occurs in Scripture. Strong's #1846 BDB #200. Our first line reads: **How often is the lamp of the corrupt extinguished?** The truer sense might be: **Just really how often is the lamp of the corrupt extinguished?**

Job, in this first line, is responding directly to what Bildad said earlier. **“Indeed, the light of the wicked goes out and the flame of his fire gives no light. The light in his tent is darkened and his lamp goes out above him.”** (Job 18:5–6). And Job answers him, “Really, now, Bildad, just how often is the lamp of the wicked extinguished?” Or, perhaps, somewhat less literally, “Just look around you, dumb ass—the lamp of the wicked is not being extinguished.”

Since Bildad has maintained in Job 18:5–6 that the lamp of the wicked would be extinguished and that their tents would be left dark, *Job replies to this by asking how often it occurred. He inquires whether it was a frequent thing. By this, he implies that it was not universal; that it was a less frequent occurrence than they supposed. The meaning is, “How often does it, in fact, happen that the light of the wicked is extinguished, and that god distributes sorrows among them in his anger? Much less frequently than you suppose, for he bestows upon many of them tokens of abundant prosperity.” In this manner, by an appeal to fact and observation, Job aims to convince them that their position was wrong, and that it was not true that the wicked were invariably overwhelmed with calamity, as they had maintained.*⁴⁵

The second line begins with the *wâw* conjunction, which here appears to continue the question format from above. Literally, we have *and*, but the idea is that this should begin, *how seldom...? or just how often...?* How do we know that we have run out of question? Possibly when Job stops using the *wâw* conjunction, which moves us along to the next verse. Or, possibly when context no longer requires the application of the same question. We begin this thought with the very simple verb, the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *to come, to come in, to enter*. What follows is the prepositional phrase *upon them*. Then we have masculine singular noun *'êyd* (עֵיךְ) [pronounced *ayd*], which means *a burden or a load [by which one is crushed], a heavy misfortune, distress, calamity*. Strong's #343 BDB #15. This gives us: **And [just how often] does their misfortune come upon them?**

Then it appears as though we begin with a third line. There is no *wâw* conjunction, there is no pausal form; it is just that we have a complete thought, and we appear to be beginning with another thought. We begin with the masculine plural noun *che^vvel* (כְּהֵבֵל) [pronounced *KHE^B-vel*], which means *pain, pang*. Gesenius points out that this is particularly used of parturient women (young women about to give birth). This means intense, severe, concentrated pain (compare its use in Job 39:3). This word, by the way, is clearly a homonym with a word that means *cord, line* (and perhaps the umbilical cord is the connection?). Strong's #2256 BDB #286. The main verb is the masculine singular, Piel imperfect of *châlaq* (חָלַק) [pronounced *chaw-LAHK*], which means *to divide, to apportion, to allot, to distribute, to share*. This is also a homonym, its twin means *to escape, to be slippery*. Strong's #2505 BDB #323. This line is completed with *in His nostril [anger]*, giving us: **He apportions [intense] pains in His anger.** Now we have some interpretation to do. This can be taken in several ways. It can be taken as a continuation of the question first posed and mean: **Just how often does He apportion [intense] pains in His anger?** This perhaps fits best with the context—just as we, in our voice, use a particular tone, that this is a question may have been conveyed by its tone, as there is no other reason to so interpret it.⁴⁶ Furthermore, we are interpreting this as *God* is the subject of the verb, which is contextually sound. We would not interpret this as the

⁴⁵ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 354.

⁴⁶ Keil and Delitzsch also suggest that the question should be applied to all three phrases in this verse, as well as to the two phrases in the next (Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, p. 465.).

wicked being the subject of the verb, as they are presented throughout this passage as being in the plural, whereas God is given in the singular.

Again, this is a direct response to what Bildad has said. Bildad made the statement: “His strength is famished and calamity is ready at his side.” (Job 18:12). And Job replies, “The hell it is!” Barnes: *Just how often, in fact, did He [God] treat the wicked as they deserved, and overwhelm them with calamity. It was not true that He did it, by any means, as often as they maintained, or so as to make it a certain rule in judging of character.*⁴⁷

<p>They are like straw to faces of wind and like chaff—steals him away a storm wind.</p>	<p>Job 21:18</p>	<p>[How often] are they [the infidels] as straw before the wind and [how often are they] like chaff—a storm steals it away.</p>
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**The infidels are just like straw before the wind
and they are like chaff that a storm wind blows away.**

For this verse to make the most sense, we carry down the question (*just how often*) from the previous verse. Let's first see what others have done with this:

<p><i>The Emphasized Bible</i> JPS (Tanakh) Keil and Delitzsch (updated) NASB The Septuagint <i>Young's Literal Translation</i></p>	<p>They become as straw before the win, And as chaff which the storm stealth away. Let them become like straw in the wind, Like chaff carried off by a storm. That they become as straw before the wind, And as chaff which the storm sweeps away!? “Are they as straw before the wind, And like chaff which the storm carries away?” And they will be as chaff before the wind, or as dust which the storm has taken up. They are as straw before win, And as chaff a hurricane hath stolen away,...</p>
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You will note that the NASB continues with this as though Job is asking a rhetorical questions. There are no interrogative particles in this verse. However, this verse seems to integrate better with the context by applying the question (*how often*) from the previous verse. Keil and Delitzsch agree, but they do this by inserting a *that* at the beginning of the verse (which is also not found in the original text). *That* seems to be a less intrusive way of continuing the question.

We begin with the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *to be* with the kaph preposition and the masculine singular noun the^bven (תֵּבֶן) [pronounced *TE^b-ven*], which means *straw*. Strong's #8401 BDB #1061. Literally, what follows is *to faces of wind*, which can be translated *before the wind*. This gives us: **They [the infidels] are as straw before the wind**. Or, by interpretation, **[How often] are they as straw before the wind?**

First, in order to interpret this, we must understand that the straw being blown by the wind is a bad thing for the straw. The straw has no power or stability of its own—whatever the wind chooses to do to it, it must go with the wind. Against God's enemies, Asaph prayed: **O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like chaff before the wind** (Psalm 83:13; see Psalm 35:5). See also Psalm 1:4, where the wicked are said to be chaff which the wind drives away. David and Asaph do not say that the wicked are like chaff before the wind; they simply pray for that to be the situation—for God to uproot them and blow them away.

To me, it seems to make the most sense for this to continue the question *how often* from the previous verse. Are the infidels in question rich, and then suddenly, with the wind, have all of their possessions blown away? Job asks his associates, “Really now, just how often does this occur?”

⁴⁷ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 354.

In the next line, we have *and like chaff* followed by the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect, 3rd person masculine singular suffix, of *gâna^{bv}* (גָּנָה) [pronounced *gaw-NAH^{bv}*], which generally means *to steal, to take away by theft, to deceive*. Strong's #1589 BDB #170. The subject is the feminine singular noun *çûwphâh* (סוּפָה) [pronounced *soo-FAW*], which means *hurricane, storm-wind, whirlwind, tempest*. Strong's #5492 BDB #693. This gives us: **And like chaff a storm-wind steals away.**

The interpretation of just the words found in this verse is tough. One route, which makes the most sense, is to do what the NASB did, and interpret this as a continuation of the question from the previous verse. However, let's, for a moment, not interpret this verse as a continuation of the questions of the previous verse. Job would then simply be stating a fact. **"The infidels are simply as straw before the wind and they are like the chaff which a storm steals away."** This emphasizes both their unimportance and how easily upset they are. It takes very little for God to completely overturn the life of the infidel. However, this is not the case; this is not what happens to the rich infidel. Even though God can certainly turn the life of the successful infidel as wind blows the chaff, God does not choose to do this (Job will add, in vv. 23–24, speaking of the infidel: **"One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and satisfied. His pails are filled with milk and the marrow of his bones has been moistened."**).

Barnes interprets this as a continuation of the question of the previous verse (and, with his interpretation, I side): *According to the interpretation proposed of the previous verse, this may be read as a question, "How often is it that the wicked are made like stubble? You say that God deals with men exactly according to their characters, and that the wicked are certainly subjected to calamities; but how often does this, in fact, occur? Is it a uniform law? Do they not, in fact, live in prosperity, and arrive at a good old age?"*⁴⁸ The final interpretation of this verse appears to be the same, whether the verse itself is taken as a question or not.

One of the difficulties when examining a passage verse by verse and often word by word, is that the forest is lost for the trees. There is a particular interpretation of the verse below, which also colors how one views several subsequent verses. When looking at this word by word, it is still not clear which interpretation should be accepted. Therefore, once we have gotten several verses into this, I will stop and give you three translations of **Job 21:17–21**, unencumbered by exegesis, followed by some analysis of the interpretations. Often, you must view a passage holistically in order to grasp its ebb and flow.

Now, we might need a roadmap for the following couple verses. Job, out of nowhere, appears to say that God will store up revenge/discipline/wrath for the sons of the infidel. This, although literal, does not appear to be the correct interpretation. What Job seems to do in the next two verses is, he sets up a scenario that his associates might suggest, follows that scenario out; and then argues against it.

**God stores up for his sons his iniquity;
He recompenses unto him and he know.**

Job
21:19

**[You might suggest] 'God stores up his
iniquity for his sons!
He will recompense him and he will know it.**

**Right now, you might be thinking, 'God will store up the punishment for his iniquity for his sons.
He will recompense him by punishing his sons, and he will know it!**

Let's first see what others have done with this:

CEV	You say, "God will punish those sinners' children in place of those sinners."
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Shall God reserve for his children his sorrow? Let him recompense him so that he may know it;...
JPS (Tanakh)	[You say,] "God is reserving his punishment for his sons"; Let it be paid back to him that he may feel it.

⁴⁸ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 354.

Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	“Eloah lays up his iniquity for his children!” May He recompense it to him that he may feel it.
NASB	“You say ‘God stores away a man’s [lit., <i>his</i>] iniquity for his sons.’ Let God [lit., <i>Him</i>] repay him so that he may know it.
NJB	So God is storing up punishment for his children? But the wicked himself should be punished, and should know it!
Owen’s Translation	God stores up for their sons their iniquity; let Him recompense it to themselves that they may know it.
The Septuagint	Let his substance fail his children; [God] will recompense him, and he will know it.
Young’s Literal Translation	God layeth up for his sons his sorrow, He giveth recompense unto him—and he knoweth.

You will note that the JPS and the NASB continue in the same vein—they have to interpret the passage, and so they have. Rotherham also has some problems with this verse, and so expresses it as a question, even though there is no particle that would indicate that there is a question here. What is being stated is not Job’s opinion (according to them), but the opinions of Job’s three companions (a viewpoint that Job will take issue with). The problem with this is that *they did not say*; none of Job’s companions have stated that God would store up what was due the infidel and take it out on his children. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Job is anticipating this question/objection which would be logically made by his friends (“Well, certainly, some rich infidels are not punished here on this earth; but God saves up their due punishment for their sons.”). Grammatically, there is no reason to take either of these two positions. However, we do not know the tone of Job’s voice (Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Job uses an interrogatory inflection in his voice). A moderately common way that we find this done in English, is that during an argument, we occasionally imitate the voice and diction of the person that we are arguing with, and state an absurd position or state a question that they might pose (or have posed) based upon what they have said. Again, none of this comes from the Hebrew—it is a position taken by those who interpret this verse that way because of the context. Given Zophar’s false applications and superficial approach, Job is logically anticipating his counter arguments and dealing with them here.

Another, but less likely, interpretation of this passage is that Job is musing other circumstances of the successful and wealthy infidel. Originally, I tried to make this interpretation work, as it involved no damage to the original Hebrew (at least, what we have of it), but it just did not integrate well with the context.

In order to better understand this verse, and why it must be interpreted, I have listed the six main interpretations of it below. Translators, as they went through this passage, felt as though some interpretation must be added in order to aide the common reader.

The first word in this verse is *Elohim* (*God* in the plural). The verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of tsâphan (טָפַן) [pronounced *tsaw-FAHN*], and it means *to hide, to conceal, to lay up (in storage), to store (as treasure), to treasure up*. Strong’s #6845 BDB #860. Zophar told Job that God stored up darkness for the infidel; Job here says that *God stores up for his sons* and follows that with the masculine singular noun ’âwen (אָוֵן) [pronounced *AW-wen*], which means *iniquity, misfortune which results from iniquity*. Strong’s #205 BDB #19. This is affixed to the 3rd person masculine singular suffix, giving us: **God stores up for his sons his iniquity [or, his misfortune, which is a result of his iniquity]**. Let me give you my interpretation: Job is running through several scenarios which appear to take place when it comes to the relationship between God and the rich unbeliever. One option is that what is due the infidel in question is passed along to his children. Job carries out this scenario for a couple of verses.

In the second line, we have the 3rd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect of shâlêm (שָׁלַם) [pronounced *shaw-LAME*] and it means *to recompense, to repay, to restore, to complete, to make perfect, to requite*. In the Piel, this means *to make secure, to keep safe, to complete, to finish, to restore, to requite, to recompense*. Strong’s #7999 BDB #1022. This is followed by *unto him and he knows*. This gives us: **He keeps safe [and recompenses] unto him and he knows [it]**.

Interpretation here is difficult. If we just take what is written here, adding no words, then we might think that Job is continuing with the same line of thinking. God saves up this retribution and gives it to the children of the infidel and these children, as well as the infidel, know it—they are fully aware that God is doing this. Now, Job is simply following out a scenario, which he will continue in the next verse, and then draw some conclusions to in subsequent verses.

One of the things which is important in interpreting this book of Job is that what Job says is not always true. Job has moments—in fact, long speeches—where he is guided by the Holy Spirit; and he has times when he is simply contemplating what is going on. Here he is simply offering some scenarios which may or may not be true. His thinking—God is just and must, by His very character, dispense justice—that is true. His application—that God, if He does not recompense the infidel, then He recompenses his children—that is not necessarily true. What Job is observing is fairly simple and fairly common, however. Sometimes when a man is successful, he has worked hard all of his life and has fallen within the divine laws of economics. However, his children, being raised with fortune and being heir to a fortune, often do not possess the same values. Therefore, they often fritter away his fortune and live decadent, hedonistic lifestyles which result in what might appear to be discipline, but is simply an outworking of natural laws again. The infidel father is rewarded by the same laws which appear to discipline his children. This is what Job has observed, and he simply misinterprets it. He has taken a true doctrine—the doctrine of God’s perfect justice—and he has taken true observations, and he has incorrectly applied one to the other, resulting in a false conclusion—that God saves up His justice at times for the children of the successful infidel. That Job would do this is not that unusual—the charismatic crowd has done that for decades. They take a little bit of observation and a little bit from the Bible and meld them into a false theology. You must allow God’s Word to interpret itself. Job, of course, given his circumstances and the fact that there was very little in his day by way of Holy Writ, can be forgiven for his misapplication of God’s perfect justice; the charismatics cannot be forgiven their false applications. Now, realize that in the previous couple paragraphs, the interpretation I rendered was based upon taking this verse at face value.

My actual interpretation of this passage is that we have a scenario which Job suggests, anticipating objections and arguments of his three associates. He follows this scenario out for a couple of verses, and then argues against it in v. 21 and following. You may wonder, *does this make sense for Job to make an argument from this perspective?* Absolutely. Throughout this book of Job, there are times when it appears as though the speaker almost ignores what has come before him. He launches out on a set of arguments which do not seem to necessarily go with the previous speaker. What we often do in an argument is we are thinking of our position, our counter attack and our arguments while the other person is speaking, almost to the point of not listening to them. Job, therefore, realizes that at this point, his associates may have found an alternate position, so he is suggesting it and arguing against it to (1) dispose of their arguments before these arguments are posed; and, (2) to regain their attention for the remainder of this chapter. We may simply interpret this as a counter-argument or digression which has occurred to Job, and Job decides to herein to state that digression and then follow it out logically.

The Six Interpretations of Job 21:19

Interpretation	Appropriate Translation	Those who take this position
It is not necessary to insert any words in order to interpret this verse.	God lays up for His sons His sorrow, He gives a proper payment to him—and he knoweth.	None; Young and Owen render it this way, as they are simply translating and they do very little by way of interpreting.

The Six Interpretations of Job 21:19

Interpretation	Appropriate Translation	Those who take this position
Job begins this verse with a rhetorical question.	Shall Elohim reserve for his children his sorrow? Let him recompense him so that he may know it;...	Rotherham, NJB ⁴⁹
Job is stating a position which his friends have taken.	<i>“You say ‘God stores away a man’s [lit., his] iniquity for his sons.’ Let God [lit., Him] repay him so that he may know it.</i>	NASB, JPS, Keil and Delitzsch, Barnes, NRSV, <i>The Amplified Bible</i> , REB ⁵⁰
Job is expressing a wish or desire.	May God not store up the man’s misery for his children; let him requite the man himself so that he feels it.	NAB
Job states a common position which has been taken by others.	[It is said,] ‘God stores up a man’s punishment for his sons.’ Let him repay the man himself, so that he will know it!	NIV
Job is stating a position that his associates might take; he is anticipating their argument.	[You might suggest] ‘God stores up his iniquity for his sons! He will recompense him and he will know it.	Kukis

Now, you might look at this and think, *this is a bit much!* The next few verses will be a *bit much*. Let’s say that this is the position of Job’s three associates; or, let’s say that this is what Job perceives that they are thinking. For how long do we keep this up? For how many verses do they think this; or for how much into the passage do we examine what they say?

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Now, the related passage which everyone gives thought to is Ex. 34:6–7, which reads: **Then Jehovah passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “Jehovah, Jehovah God, is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in grace and truth, Who preserves grace for thousands, Who forgives iniquity, rebellion and sin; yet He will by no means leave sin unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”** What’s going on here? What we do not have is children and grandchildren being disciplined for the sins of their father. God does not do that. He does not become so upset with someone’s behavior that He begins punishing their children, their grandchildren and then their great grandchildren. The short and easy explanation is that a man’s sins can often have long-reaching effects, touching his children for several generations. **“But every one will die for his own iniquity”** (Jer. 31:30a). It can also be true that the second generation will be blessed by God, while their fathers are placed under discipline (gen X vs. the Generation of Promise in Num. 14:28–32 illustrate that). The lengthier explanation will be saved for the exegesis of that passage (along with several passages which say the same thing).

⁴⁹ The position of the NJB is actually somewhere between a question and the interpretation that Job’s friends have taken (or will take) this position. They render this: **So God is storing up punishment for his children? But the wicked himself should be punished, and should know it!**

⁵⁰ The differences can be further subdivided as to *how far* into this passage is Job stating the position of his opposition. Barnes has their position being taken to v. 22; others have this position being stated in vv. 19–20.

What Job has done is he has anticipated one of their arguments. In fact, it is an argument which, from their standpoint, is a no-lose argument. Sure, there are some wealthy and successful infidels around, but, their sons will get the discipline due to the father—or the grandsons will. You see, that way, they don't have to point out specific examples. With a specific example, they would simply say, "Oh, well, his son will catch hell for what he did"; or, "That penalty for sin will fall upon his grandsons." Job heads them off at the pass by suggesting this first, and then expressing his argument against it.

**They see—his eyes⁵¹—his destruction
and from wrath of Almighty, he will drink.**

Job
21:20

**His eyes see his destruction
and he will drink from the wrath of the
Almighty.**

His eyes will see his destruction as he drinks from the wrath of the Almighty.

Let's see what others have done first:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	His own eyes shall see his misfortune, And <the wrath of the Almighty> shall he drink.
JPS (Tanakh)	Let his eyes see his ruin, And let him drink the wrath of Shaddai.
Keil and Delitzsch	May his own eyes see his ruin, And let him drink of the glowing wrath of the Almighty.
NASB	"Let his own eyes see his decay, And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty."
Owen	Let their own eyes see their destruction and of the wrath of the Almighty let them drink.
The Septuagint	Let his eyes see his own destruction, and let him not be saved by the Lord.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	His own eyes see his destruction, And of the wrath of the Mighty be drinketh.

You will note how Rotherham differs from the others—Rotherham offers this scenario as an accomplished fact and the other translations indicate that he would like this to be the result. You will also notice that Owen riddles these past couple verses with masculine plural suffixes and subjects, although most of them should be masculine singular. We begin with the 3rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect of *to see*, followed by the subject of the verb, *his eyes*. What *his eyes see* is the *kīyd* (כִּיַד) [pronounced *keed*], which possibly means *misfortune*. This word is only found here, it has no real cognates (although it is similar to the word for *javelin*). In other words, we have determined its meaning by context and the early codices. Strong's #3589 BDB #475. This gives us: [His eyes see his misfortune \[or, destruction\]...](#)

The second line reads, literally, *...and from a wrath of Almighty he drinks*. What Job is offering here is another set of options—here the infidel sees his own misfortune or destruction and he drinks himself from the wrath of God. Again, Job is simply offering up various observed scenarios.

Now, Keil and Delitzsch claim that these are jussive forms of the verbs, and so interpret this verse; Owen does not indicate that these are jussive forms, but so translates the verse. In such a case, the thinking is that v. 19a stated the false position and Job is now answering that false position. The other more likely position is, Job is continuing to state a false position in this verse.

**For what [is] his pleasure in his house after
him
and a number of his months are divided?**

Job
21:21

**For what is his pleasure in his house
after he and a number of his months are
separated?'**

For what pleasure will he take from his possessions once he has died?'

⁵¹ Written eye, read eyes. In two early printed editions, the Aramaic, the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate, it is written and read eyes.

Let's first see what others have done with this verse:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	For what shall be his pleasure in his house after him, When the number of his months is cut in twain?
JPS (Tanakh)	For what does he care about the fate of his family When his number of months runs out?
NASB	"For what does he care for his household after him [i.e., <i>after he dies</i>], When the number of his months is cut off?"
Owen's Translation	For what do they care for their houses after them when the number of their months is cut off.
The Septuagint	For his desire is in his house with him, and the number of his months has been suddenly cut off.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	For what <i>is</i> his delight in his house after him, And the number of his months cut off?

This verse begins with *for what* and then we have the masculine singular noun (with a masculine singular suffix) *chêphets* (חֶפֶת) [pronounced *KHAY-fets*], which means *a delight, a pleasure*. Strong's #2656 BDB #343. This is followed by *in his house after him*, giving us: **For what [is] his pleasure in his house after him?** That is, what pleasure can he derive from his home and his possessions after he has died?

The second line essentially continues the first. There is a *wâw* conjunction, which is almost invariably rendered *and*; however, you will note that most of the translations above rendered it as *when*. Then we have the masculine singular construct of *miç^ephâr* (מִיֶּסֶפֶר) [pronounced *mis^e-FAWR*] means *number, counted, numerical total, a recounting*. Strong's #4557 BDB #708. It is in close connection to the masculine plural noun *chôdesh* (חֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced *KHOH-desh*], which means *new moon, month*. Each new moon means another month has gone by. Strong's #2320 BDB #294. Then we have the 3rd person masculine plural, Pual perfect of *châtsats* (חָטַט) [pronounced *khaw-tsahts*], which is said to mean *to divide*. In the Pual, it is said by Gesenius to mean *to cut off, to be finished, to be ended*. There seems to be a lot of agreement for this, even though this is the only time that this occurs in the Pual stem (which is the passive, intensive stem; it is also a stem which indicates completed action). Strong's #2686 BDB #346. This gives us: **...and a number of his months is cut off [or, divided].**

One way to interpret this is not to separate the verses with the *wâw* but with the *after*; this gives more sense to the final verb. Our second line is then: **...after he and a number of his months are separated.** That is, God has given him just so many moons on this earth, and once he is separated from these months, then he no longer can delight in his earthly possessions.

Although I am not completely content with the translation, it appears as though the idea is that, when a man's time is up, then he receives no more pleasure from his possessions once he has died. The problem is that this does not appear to fit well with the context. I like some of the other suggested translations better than mine, e.g., **"For what does he care for his household after him, when the number of his days is cut off?"** The problem is that this does not really match the Hebrew or the Greek. So, do you alter the translation enough so that this verse makes contextual sense, or do you give it the actual translation, which does not seem to fit in (ditto for the next verse)? Most translators have one shot at their translation, and therefore, opt for this to make as much contextual sense as possible, without doing too much damage to the original language. My option at this point would be to say that there must be some problem with the text found in the Hebrew; however, I make that assertion without evidence beyond the fact that this just does not fit. Obviously, one's options at this point all have their drawbacks.

The interpretation which makes the most sense to me is that Job is still quoting a possible position that his friends might take. An argument, or set of arguments that they might propose would be as follows: (1) God will store up discipline for the son of the infidel who is not disciplined; in this, the man will know that he has received discipline from God (v. 19). (2) His own eyes will see his own body decay, and in this way, he drinks from the wrath of the Almighty (v. 20). (3) He cannot take any pleasure in his possessions after he has died (v. 21).⁵² So Job is not

⁵² This is not my own exclusive proposition; this is in agreement with Barnes' interpretation as well.

setting up one simple position that his associates might take, but he explores several positions; then, in the next verse, he will grab them by the collar and say, “What the hell do you think you are going to do, teach God? Are you going to teach the Almighty, the One Who judges the angels?” This interpretation allows us to stay with the original language (except that we must insert *you might say* at the beginning of v. 19). Eliphaz has already taken the position that a rich infidel will be at peace, and then suddenly, the destroyer will come upon him (Job 14:21). So Job is taking their positions and extrapolation of their positions, and dealing with them here.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Job 21:17–21

It is pretty much impossible for us to translate this passage literally without the addition of a few words here and there. What we hope to do is to properly interpret this passage and do as little damage to the actual translation as possible. If you want a very literal translation, pick up a copy of *Young's Literal Translation*. There will be times, like this passage, where it will not be altogether clear as to what is being said.

The most common way to translate and interpret this passage is to insert some additional words in v. 19. We are going to place my literal translation side-by-side the NASB and the JPS, which both interpret v. 19 as something which Zophar (and his two companions) have alleged; so that this is not lost on the reader, they insert *you say* to help with the interpretation. It is very likely that such an assertion could be indicated by the tone of Job's voice in speaking to his friends, rather than by stating it outright. The tone and inflection of a person's voice is lost when only the text of his words are recorded, and therefore, we lose some of the meaning in that way (perhaps the batteries on Bildad's video camera were low that day).

My Literal Translation*	JPS	NASB
<p>[Just] how often is the lamp of the corrupt extinguished? And [just how often] does their misfortune come upon them? [and just how often] does He apportion [intense] pain in His anger. [How often] are they [the infidels] as straw before the wind and [how often are they] like chaff—a storm steals it away. [You might say] ‘God stores up his iniquity for his sons! He will recompense him and he will know it. His eyes see his destruction and he will drink from the wrath of the Almighty. For what is his pleasure in his house after he and a number of his months are separated?’</p>	<p>How seldom does the lamp of the wicked fail, Does the calamity they deserve befall them, Does He apportion [their] lot in anger! Let them become like straw in the wind, Like chaff carried off by a storm. [You say,] “God is reserving his punishment for his sons”; Let it be paid back to him that he may feel it. Let his eyes see his ruin, And let him drink the wrath of Shaddai. For what does he care about the fate of his family When his number of months runs out?</p>	<p>“How often is the lamp of the wicked put out, Or <i>does</i> their calamity fall on them? Does God [lit., <i>He</i>] apportion destruction in His anger? Are they as straw before the wind, And like chaff which the storm carries away? <i>You say</i> ‘God stores away a man’s [lit., <i>his</i>] iniquity for his sons.’ Let God [lit., <i>Him</i>] repay him so that he may know <i>it</i>. Let his own eyes see his decay, And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what does he care for his household after him [i.e., <i>after he dies</i>], When the number of his months is cut off?”</p>

You may wonder, in glancing below, and then above, why are we looking at several interpretations? The interpretation or spin that we put on this passage will impact the translation. A strict, word-for-word translation will not cut it for this passage (see addendum below). We first need to have an idea as to what Job is saying and how to interpret that, and then allow that to color our interpretation of the passage. We do not know the tone

of Job's voice, which may have convey more than the simple Hebrew words.

Your second question might be, *why would God do that? Why would He make it difficult to understand?* God has placed His Word on this earth for our benefit and we are to live in His Word. Most believers, sadly, have only the most superficial understanding of the Bible and their theology is far from the truth because of their misunderstanding of God's Word. It is not because of passages like this, but because of their true disinterest in what God has given them. If we spend a reasonable amount of time trying to understand what God has for us in His Word, then He will cause us to understand His Word, including many of the difficult passages. If we **do not, but go off on our own direction, then we will be faced with strong delusion. For this reason, God will send** to them strong delusion so that they might believe the lie (II Thess. 2:11). So that you are not confused, much of the most basic doctrines in Scripture are easy to understand. Salvation—the mechanics, the reasons that we need it, etc.—this is easy to grasp in the Bible. There are hundreds of passages which deal with salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. The most important and basic doctrines can be understood with relative ease (as long as one is willing to subordinate his will and predispositions to divine viewpoint).

The first interpretation: You will note that in both the JPS and the NASB, v. 19 begins with *you say*, although that is not found in the original text. From thereon out, we have several *let's* also inserted by the two translations, where Job is saying, "Okay, so this is your viewpoint; well then, if it's true, then *let* God do this and *let* God do that." It is not an errant interpretation, by any means. It is a reasonable interpretation, and one which might be sustained if we could hear the actual tone of Job's voice (which would possibly imply what these two translations have supplied). So, in this interpretation, Job states in v. 19a an alternative or a digressive position, and then says what God should do in such a case, and he concludes in v. 21.

The second interpretation: Job gives an alternative set of circumstances throughout these several verses. That is, he first has dealt with, *what about the infidel who does not receive his just reward on this earth?* Then he pursues the situation of the infidel whose just earthly reward is dispensed to his sons. This is the interpretation that I originally went with, as it did the least amount of damage to the original Hebrew. However, I could not make it work with the context. Job, in this chapter, does not appear to be setting up several observed scenarios.

The third interpretation: Job states outright what will actually happen to these men (i.e., men who are rich infidels and seemingly receive no punishment here on earth) in eternity, when their possessions are no longer an issue to their well-being. They do not receive their retribution here on earth, but in at the hand of God after death. Such an interpretation would represent a digression, which is not out of the ordinary for either Job or his friends. The problem is that it is that this particular train of thought is not really pursued in the subsequent verses. Furthermore, no such eternal, other worldly images are suggested and pursued in later verses.

A fourth interpretation: Job states the position that his associates might be forming in their minds as he speaks in vv. 19–20, and then deals with it in v. 21. Since it is obvious that not every infidel is punished and that some are successful, an alternate explanation is that God punishes their children or grandchildren. Job's answer to this position is succinct: "Why should this dead infidel give a flying frog about what happens after he is dead?" This interpretation requires us to take some liberties with the text of v. 21. In this interpretation, Job does not state at all what God *should* do, but what his associates are thinking that God *might* do.

The final and correct interpretation: The position which I believe is correct, is that Job, for three verses, states a position which is a digression but a position which his colleagues might be mentally putting together, and this position he deals with in vv. 23–26. In other words, like the first and fourth interpretations, Job anticipates the position of those he is arguing with, and then deals with it. The only difference in these interpretations is the length of time given to Job's statement of the digressional position. In the first interpretation, Job states this position in half a verse, and in this interpretation, he states that position in two verses. In the fourth, Job carries this position to v. 20, and answers it in v. 21. In this interpretation, Job nowhere states what God *should* or *might* do, but simply what God has done as well as some observable facts which, if one accepts the bogus positions

of his associates, make little or no sense. One man dies after living the life of a successful hedonist and another dies, not having enjoyed any of the pleasures of this life. Their eventual end is identical—if man always receives on this earth the punishment that he deserves, then simple, common observations no longer make any sense.

This final interpretation works in several ways: (1) Job’s associates have never stated this position outright; therefore, it makes little sense to allege that this is their stated position. (2) V. 22 seems to be placed in its position incorrectly. However, as a verse placed to grab Job’s associates by their respective collars, it works in that position. (3) All the interpretations that I have read require the insertion of some words not found in the original text, and possibly only found in the tone of Job’s voice. This interpretation requires as few additions as any other. (4) This interpretation allows for Job to be intelligent, logical and proactive, which fits well with his character.

Now, why do I beat this passage to death as I have? Why do I present so many positions and deal with them in the detail that I have? Most people who read this exegetical study are going to be well-read and erudite. Therefore, stating a position and saying, *and that’s the way it is* would not be enough. Furthermore, this is the Word of God, and it requires care and diligence when interpreting it. If I can get away with a paragraph of explanation, I am happy with that. However, in a passage like this, where there is no exegetical study anywhere which correctly interprets it, then I have to spend the time explaining it in great detail, offering up the alternate interpretations. God’s Word deserves no less. Now, you might be thinking, *well, this just isn’t that important by comparison to other passages, and simply doesn’t deserve this kind of time and attention.* And I might agree with you here; however, our interpretive skills need to be sharp. I have never seen *anyone* correctly interpret I Cor. 13:1–3 ever. This passage has been taken as the basis for men speaking in tongues and understanding those *tongues* to be heavenly languages, which are heard as gibberish to most of us. Not once in any source, charismatic or non-charismatic, have I ever read this passage properly interpreted—however, take this passage away from the charismatics, and they no longer have a leg to stand on. And what is sad about the lack of correct interpretations of this passage, is that it can be understood correctly apart from any exegetical tricks from the Greek. The book of Job allows us to hone our interpretive and exegetical skills so that we can approach the remainder of the Word of God with the ability to understand it.

*In my literal rendering from the Hebrew, I may have changed the word order slightly, and added a definite article now and again; however, I endeavored to stay with the most common meanings of the words found, keeping the number and usually the gender, as was found in the Hebrew. Verb tense was also taken into consideration and generally rendered with a high degree of literalness.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Job 21:17–21—the Less Literal Translations

There are several translations who tell us that, as you read the passage, you will immediately understand it. So, operating from that theory, along with the fact that we have beat these interpretations to death, let me give you three translations which are purported to be clearly understood upon first reading.

God’s Word™	CEV	NLT
<p>“[You say] ‘God saves a person’s punishment for his children.’ God should pay back that person so that he would know that it is a punishment. His eyes should see his own ruin. He should drink from the</p>	<p>You say, “God will punish those sinners’ children in place of those sinners.” But I say, “Let him punish those sinners themselves until they really feel it. Let God All-Powerful force them to drink their own destruction from the cup</p>	<p>“Yet the wicked get away with it time and time again. They rarely have trouble, and God skips them when he distributes sorrows in his anger. Are they driven before the wind like straw? Are they carried away by the storm? Not at all! “Well,’ you say, ‘at least God will punish their children!’ But I say</p>

God's Word™	CEV	NLT
wrath of the Almighty. How can he be interested in his family after he's gone, when the number of his months is cut short?"	of his anger. Because after they are dead, they won't care what happens to their children."	that God should punish the ones who sin, not their children! Let them feel their own penalty. Let them drink deeply of the anger of the Almighty. For when they are dead, they will not care what happens to their family."
Clearly, these less-than-literal translations do give us a very good <i>first-read</i> interpretation. No translation is necessarily correct, but it is in essential agreement with several exegetes.		

Let me conclude with a statement made by Keil and Delitzsch: *Death is the end of all clear thought and perception. If therefore the godless receives the reward of his deeds, he should receive it not in his children, but in his own body during life. But this is the very thing that is too frequently found to be wanting.*⁵³

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Death Comes to All Men Alike

To God will he teach knowledge
and he, exalted ones, judges?

Job
21:22

Does one teach knowledge to God
[seeing that] He judges exalted ones [i.e.,
angels]?

Does one propose to teach knowledge to God, seeing that He judges the angels?

This is a difficult verse, not because it is difficult to translate, but it seems to come out of nowhere. Job appears to be talking about the lives and deaths of successful infidels, and suddenly, he says this. It appears to be more or less a new topic, so much so that one translation, the NAB, just picks this verse up and places it into the next chapter (I will quote from that translation later on down the line).

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Is it <to GOD> one can teach knowledge, Seeing that he shall judge them who are on high ?
JPS (Tanakh)	Can God be instructed in knowledge, He who judges from such heights?
NASB	"Can anyone teach God knowledge, In that He judges those on high?"
Owen's Translation	To God will any teach knowledge, seeing that He, those that are on high, judges?
The Septuagint	Is it not the Lord who teaches understanding and knowledge? And does not he judge murders?
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	To God doth <i>one</i> teach knowledge, And He the high doth judge?

We begin with the interrogative particle, which can simply indicate that the sentence is a question. Then we have *to God*, which is in the emphatic position (the indirect object of the verb normally does not come first in a Hebrew sentence). This is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect of *lâmed* (למד) [pronounced *law-MAHD*], which means, in the Qal, *to learn, to train*; and in the Piel, it means *to teach*. Strong's #3925 BDB #540. What follows is the direct object—that which is taught—the feminine singular noun *da'ath* (דעת) [pronounced *DAH-ahth*] means *knowledge*. Strong's #1847 BDB #395. This is in the pausal form, so our first line is: **Does one [lit., he] teach knowledge to God...?**

⁵³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, p. 467.

Barnes: *The substance of the reply is, that no one could prescribe to God how He should deal with men, and that it was not a fact that men were treated as they had supposed. Instead of its being true, as they maintained, that wicked men would all be cut down in some fearful and violent manner, as a punishment for their sins, Job goes on (ver. 23–26 to show that they died in a great variety of ways—one in full age and prosperity, and another in another manner. This, he says, God directs as He pleases. No one can teach Him knowledge; no one can tell Him what He ought to do. The reasoning of his friends, Job seems to imply, had been rather an attempt to teach God how He ought to deal with men, than a patient and candid inquiry into the facts in the case, and he says the facts were not as they supposed they ought to be.*⁵⁴

This particular question or questions similar to it, are asked a great deal in Scripture. **Who has directed the Spirit of Jehovah or, as His counselor, has caused Him to learn? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the way of integrity and taught Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding?** (Isa. 40:13–14). Similar passages include Isa. 45:9: **“Woe to the one quarreling with his Maker—an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands?’”** Or Rom. 11:34: **For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? (Isa. 40:13). For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16 Isa. 40:13). Who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? (Rom. 9:20b). It is God’s plan and God’s way—He teaches us of it, not vice versa. It is Job’s contention that, with their false views of God’s justice, that his three associates are trying to teach God.**

The second line continues the question (a second line in a situation like this can pose another question without offering an interrogative particle or it can continue the original question). We begin with a wâw conjunction, the emphatic 3rd person masculine singular personal pronoun, followed by masculine plural, Qal active participle of rūm (רום) [pronounced *room*] and it means *to exalt, to raise, to lift up* and even *to offer up*. As a masculine plural, Qal active participle, it means *exalted ones, lifted up ones, those who are lifted up*. Strong’s #7311 BDB #926. Then we have the main verb, the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of shâphaṭ (שָׁפַט) [pronounced *shaw-FAHT*], which means *to judge, to govern*. Strong’s #8199 BDB #1047. As a side issue—God has judged the angels and has delivered sentence upon the fallen angels. These fallen angels have not had their sentence imposed yet; therefore, the verb is in the imperfect (incomplete) tense. The continuation of the line above is: **...and He judges [the] exalted ones?** In other words, how can you be so presumptuous to tell God how He should judge man, when God judges the angels? *He rules over the great affairs of the universe, and it is presumptuous in us to attempt to prescribe to Him how He shall govern the world. The design of this and the following verses is to show, that, from the manner in which men actually die, no argument can be derived to determine what was their religious condition, or their real character. Nothing is more fallacious than that kind of reasoning.*⁵⁵

Job’s three companions have presented their theories on life, which pretty much can be boiled down to: (1) Every man receives what is his just portion here on earth at the hand of God; (2) You, Job, are suffering, therefore, that must be your just portion on this earth. Job has given them counter examples and then says, **“Can one teach knowledge to God, [seeing that] He judges [the] exalted ones [i.e., angels]?”** (Emphasis is from the Hebrew). Job is doing to them what they have done to him. He refers to them in the 3rd person masculine singular (*one*), so that he does not speak of them directly. It is by interpretation that we indicate that the subject of the first verb is different from the subject of the second.

What Job is saying to them is, “You have this idea as to how things are, but I have just given you observable examples as to why they are not as you say. There, is God wrong and you must teach Him how things should be run? You intend to correct God, the One Who judges the angels?”

⁵⁴ Barnes’ Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 355.

⁵⁵ Barnes’ Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 355.

**This one dies in a bone of his prosperity;
all of them at ease and secure.**

Job
21:23

**This one dies in his complete prosperity;
all of them [are] secure and content.**

**One passes away in complete prosperity;
all of them are secure and content.**

Now Job illustrates just how wrong his associates are with a few examples; let's first see what others have done with this verse:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	This man dieth, in the very perfection of his prosperity, Wholly tranquil and secure;...
JPS (Tanakh)	One man dies in robust health, All tranquil and untroubled;...
Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	One dies in his full strength, Being still cheerful and free from care.
NASB	“One dies in his full strength, Being wholly at ease and satisfied [or, <i>quief</i>];...”
The Septuagint	One will die in his perfect strength, and wholly at ease and prosperous;...
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	This <i>one</i> dieth in his perfect strength, Wholly at ease and quiet.

We begin the verse with the masculine singular, demonstrative adjective, meaning *this one*. The verb *mûwth* (מוּת) [pronounced *mooth*] means *to die*. Strong's #4191 BDB #559. Then we have the *bêyth* preposition, followed by the feminine singular construct of *‘etsem* (אֶתֶם) [pronounced *geh-TSEM*], which means *bone, substance, self*. According to Gesenius, when followed by a genitive, it means *itself*, and, in the English, would follow that genitive (examples: Gen. 7:13 17:23, 26 Ex. 24:10 Job 21:23). Keil and Delitzsch say that the bone denotes *corporeality, duration, existence, and therefore identity*.⁵⁶ BDB suggests that it be rendered *in full prosperity* but also offers the meaning *remains* and is often used of the dead, as in *remains of the dead*. Such a use would be both apropos and poetic. Strong's #6106 BDB #782. This is followed by the masculine singular noun (with a 3rd person masculine singular suffix) of *tôm* (תּוֹם) [pronounced *tohm*], and it means *completeness, integrity*. Strong's #8537 (& #8550) BDB #1070. Keil and Delitzsch say that this means *in perfect external health*.⁵⁷ Literally, this gives us: **This [one] dies in remains of completeness,...**; or, possibly: **This [one] dies in completeness itself**. You will note that there has been no little interpretation as to what this means. The less literal translations render this as follows:

CEV	Some of us die prosperous,...
<i>God's Word™</i>	One person dies in his prime and feels altogether happy and contented.
NIV	One man dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease.
NJB	And again: one person dies in the fullness of strength, in all possible happiness and ease.
NLT	One person dies in prosperity and security.
NRSV	One dies in full prosperity, being wholly at ease and secure.
REB	I tell you this: one man dies crowned with success, lapped in security and comfort,...

We have a lot of agreement here, although it is not necessarily with the original Hebrew text. I think also what we have is a little bit of showing off on Job's part. He has an extensive vocabulary, compared to his associates, and he occasionally uses words with their second and/or nuanced meanings. He will use *‘etsem* (*bone*) in its more common meaning in the next verse.

In any case, the meaning of this verse is, according to Barnes: *He dies in the very prime and vigour of life, surrounded with every thing that can contribute to comfort. Of the truth of this position, no one can doubt; and the wonder is, that the friends of Job had not seen or admitted it.*⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, pp. 467–468.

⁵⁷ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, p. 468.

⁵⁸ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 355.

In the second line, we have the masculine singular noun *kôl* (כֹּל) [pronounced *kohl*], which means *the whole, all of, the entirety of, all, every*. When used with a plural noun, we often translate it *all of* and with a singular noun, we translate it *every*. Affixed to this is the masculine singular suffix, which is hard to give a rendering for. You will note that of the more literal translations, nearly everyone rendered this *wholly*. Literally, this might be rendered *all of him, all he, him all, his all, all of his*. We might get away with *each one*. Strong's #3605 BDB #481. This is followed by the masculine singular adjective *shal`ănân* (שָׁלֵאֲנָן) [pronounced *shah-uh-NAWN*], which is found only here, has no real cognates, and appears to be equivalent to *sha`ănân* (שָׁאֲנָן) [pronounced *shah-uh-NAWN*], which means *at ease, one who is at ease, secure, removed from misfortune*. This is apparently how most⁵⁹ have interpreted this. *Sha`ănân* = Strong's #7600 BDB #983. *Shal`ănân* = Strong's #7946 BDB #1016.

Our second adjective is the masculine singular of *shâlâh* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAW*], and it means *to be quiet, to be at ease, to be tranquil, carefree, thoughtless, content*. Strong's #7951, 7952–7955 BDB #1017. This gives us: *...all him at ease [or, secure] and tranquil*; or, *...each one secure and tranquil*; or, *...wholly secure and tranquil*. This simply indicates an end to this infidel which is quiet, relaxed and without drama or poverty. Barnes: *That is, having every thing to make them happy, so far as external circumstances are concerned. He is borne down by no calamities; he is overwhelmed by no sudden and heavy judgments.*⁶⁰

The New American Bible (not the NASB) has an interesting take on these last few verses which is well worth examining. They see v. 22 as being out of place and believe that it should be placed in the early part of Job 22. We do not have any manuscript evidence for this, but it does seem to make a great deal of sense when taken that way:

New American Bible's Placement of V. 22		
	NAB	Literal Translation
Job 21:20–26	<p>Let his own eyes see the calamity, and the wrath of the Almighty let him drink!</p> <p>For what interest has he in his family after him, when the number of his months is finished?</p> <p>One dies in his full vigor, wholly at ease and content; His figure is full and nourished, and his bones are rich in marrow.</p> <p>Another dies in bitterness of soul, having never tasted happiness. Alike they lie down in the dust, and worms cover them both.</p>	<p>“ ‘His eyes see his [own] destruction and he will drink from the wrath of the Almighty.</p> <p>For what is his pleasure in his house after he and a number of his months are separated?’</p> <p>Does one teach knowledge to God [i.e., do you propose to teach God?] [seeing that] He judges exalted ones [i.e., angels]?</p> <p>This one dies in his complete prosperity; all of them [are] secure and content. His pails are filled with milk and the marrow of his bones is watered. And another dies with a bitter soul, and he has never tasted the good. Together, they lie down in the dust and worms cover over them.”</p>

⁵⁹ Actually, everyone that I examined interpreted it this way. We seem to have an errant lamed placed in here which perhaps belonged elsewhere in this passage.

⁶⁰ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 355.

	NAB	Literal Translation
Job 22:1–3	<p>Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: Can a man be profitable to God? Though to himself a wise man be profitable! Can anyone teach God knowledge, seeing that he judges those on high? Is it of advantage to the Almighty if you are just? Or is it a gain to him if you make your ways perfect?</p>	<p>And then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, “Can a man be of use to God? That a wise [man] is of use to himself. Is [it] a pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous or a gain that you are sound in your ways?”</p>

You will note that the passage flows more freely when v. 22 being placed in Job 22; the idea that a copyist could take a verse and misplace it is not that unusual. It would be better to have some manuscript evidence of such a thing. However, the contextual evidence is pretty strong. On the other hand, given the **interpretation** which I have given this verse, v. 22, in the Hebrew, sits well in its context.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

The prosperity of such a one is described in the following verses.

**His pails fill [of] milk
and marrow of his bones is watered.**

Job
21:24

**His pails are filled with milk
and the marrow of his bones is watered.**

Let's first see how others have dealt with this verse:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	His veins are filled with nourishment [or, <i>his sides are full of fat</i> , or, <i>His vessels (pails, pans) are full of milk</i>], And the marrow of his bones is fresh.
JPS (Tanakh)	His pails are full of milk; The marrow of his bones is juicy.
Keil and Delitzsch	His toughs are full of milk, And the marrow of his bones is well watered.
NASB	“His sides are filled out with fat [Hebrew is uncertain; some render this: <i>his pails are full of milk</i>], And the marrow of his bones is moist,…”
Owen's Translation	His pails are full of milk and the marrow of his bones is moist (watered).
The Septuagint	...and his inwards are full of fat and his marrow is diffused [in] him.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	His breasts have been full of milk, And marrow his bones doth moisten.

Here is an interesting verse! It begins with the masculine plural noun ʿāṣṣayn (אֲשֵׁרַיִם) [pronounced *guh-TEEN*], which probably means *pail, bucket*. This word only occurs in this verse. According to BDB, this word comes from an unused root, which means *to place olives into a vat, vessel or olive press*. Gesenius, on the other hand, says the unused root means *to lie down around water* and that the Arabic means *a place by water where cattle lie down*. Gesenius tends to think that the *n* should be an *m*, and that this should mean *sides, thigh*. Strong's #5845 BDB #742. The Greek word is *égkata* (ἐγκατα) [pronounced *EGG-kawt-aw*], which means *bowels, viscera, inward parts*. Strong's #none. The ancient Syriac translation is *sides*, and the Aramaic Targum is *breasts*. Affixed to this word is the 3rd person masculine singular suffix. The main verb is the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *mâlê* (מָלֵא) [pronounced *maw-LAY*], which means *to fill, to make full, to be full*. Strong's #4390 BDB #569. The word which follows is the masculine singular noun *châlâv* (חֵלֶב) [pronounced *khaw-LAW^{BV}*], which means *milk*. You may be wondering, from whence did the NASB and Rotherham get the reading *fat*? Okay, obviously, you don't use the word *whence*. *Milk* and *fat* are the same words in the Hebrew with different vowel pointing. Therefore, some have

thought that the traditional pronunciation was incorrect and that the word *fat* belonged here instead. The Greek word here is *steatos* (στέατος) [pronounced *STEH-a-toss*], which means *fat*. [There is no Strong's # for this word]. Strong's #2461 BDB #316. My thinking is that the Greek translators and some who have come after did not grasp the significance of *pails of milk*, so they went for a more common expression of abundance: *sides of fat*.⁶¹ However, there is no reason for us to adopt that viewpoint. Literally: **His pails fill [of] milk.**

In the second line, we begin with the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine singular construct of *môach* (מֹאֵךְ) [pronounced *MOH-ahkh*], which means *marrow*. This word is found only here, although there is a verbal cognate which helps to substantiate its meaning (that verbal cognate is only found in Isa. 25:6). Strong's #4221 BDB #562. This is followed by the feminine plural noun *ʿetsem*, again. *ʿEtsem* (עֵצֶם) [pronounced *geh-TSEM*] means *bone, substance, self*. Strong's #6106 BDB #782. This has the 3rd person masculine singular suffix affixed to it. The last word is the main verb, the 3rd person masculine singular, Pual imperfect of *shâqâh* (שָׁקַח) [pronounced *shaw-KAWH*], which means *to water, to irrigate* in the Qal; *to give drink to, to cause to drink* in the Hiphil. Strong's #8248 BDB #1052. Altogether, this gives us: **His pails are filled [with] milk and [the] marrow of his bones is watered.** We have a continuation of the theme that Job has got going—the rich sometimes enjoys great prosperity and health. Keil and Delitzsch tell us here that *the body is inwardly filled with vigour, strength, and health*.⁶² When Keil and Delitzsch wrote (during the late 1800's), they were unaware of the actual nutritive nature of milk in relationship to the bones. However, thousands of years before their commentary was written, Job ties together milk and the nourishment of one's bones. Scientific studies of nutrition seem to have begun in the 1700's and vitamin D (the nutrient in milk which pertains to the bones) was not identified until 1922 by Elmer McCollum.⁶³ It is fascinating that Job, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recognized this relationship between milk and bones 4000–5000 years earlier.

**And this one dies in a soul [of] bitterness
and has not eaten in the good.**

Job
21:25

**And another dies with a bitter soul,
and he has never tasted the good.**

**And another man dies with a bitter soul,
never having tasted the good things of this life.**

Here, Job gives another scenario, one which he knows his companions are familiar with. First the alternate translations:

JPS (Tanakh)	Another dies embittered, Never having tasted happiness.
Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	And another dies with a sorrowing spirit, And has not enjoyed wealth.
NASB	"While another dies with a bitter soul, Never even tasting [lit., <i>eating</i>] anything good."
The Septuagint	And another dies in bitterness of soul, not eating any good thing.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And this one dieth with a bitter soul, And have not eaten with gladness.

We begin with a *wâw* conjunction and the masculine singular, demonstrative adjective, which is most literally rendered *this one*, but certainly could be rendered *another*, as many translators have done. Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260. Then we have the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *to die*, followed by the *bêyth* preposition (*in, by, with*), and the feminine singular word for *soul*. This is further modified by the feminine singular adjective *mar* (מַר) [pronounced *mahr*], which means *bitter, bitterness*. Strong's #4751 (#4755) BDB #600. This gives us: **And this one dies in a soul [of] bitterness.** Or, **And another dies with a bitter soul.** Job has spent a great deal of time dealing with the rich and successful infidel; here he mentions the man who dies in bitterness. Job had already spoken of himself as a man with a bitter soul (Job 10:1).

⁶¹ Recall that women in the ancient world were thought to be more attractive if they were Rubenesque, as a woman with meat on her bones was considered to be well-fed, therefore from a higher social standing and therefore more desirable.

⁶² Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, p. 469.

⁶³ *The World Book Encyclopedia*; ©1983 by World Book, Inc.; Vol. N–O, p. 470.

The second line begins with the wâw conjunction, the negative particle, and the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect (indicating a completed action) of ʾâkal (אָכַל) [pronounced *aw-KAHL*], which means *to eat*. This word is found more often in a figurative sense, and should be rendered *to devour, to consume, to destroy*. Zophar in the previous chapter used this verb twice (vv. 21, 26), and now Job uses it. Strong's #398 BDB #37. What this man has not eaten is the bêyth preposition, the definite article and the feminine singular noun ʾôwvâh (אוֹבַח) [pronounced *TOWB-vaw*], which means *welfare, benefit, good, good things*. Strong's #2896 BDB #375. **And he has not eaten in the good.** I think the negative plus the perfect would be best rendered: **...and he has never eaten the good.** The completed action of the perfect combined with the negative is indicative of an action which has never taken place.

Here is the point: some men die without ever having tasted any good thing, their souls embittered over their sad lives. This is simply another example of what has occurred on this earth, and that these things occur apart from any dimension of morality or spirituality. Perhaps we are dealing with two wicked men here; and perhaps not; in any case, some live a full life of prosperity and die easily, and others are embittered with their lives and die a harsh, unpleasant death besides.

**Together upon dust they lie down
and a worm cover upon them.**

Job
21:26

**Together, they lie down in the dust
and worms cover over them.**

**These men lie down in the dust together
and worms permeate their remains.**

The other translations:

JPS (Tanakh)	They both lie in the dust And are covered with worms.
Keil and Delitzsch	They lie beside one another in the dust, And worms cover them both.
NASB	"Together they lie down in the dust, And worms cover them.
The Septuagint	But they lie down in the earth together, and corruption covers them.
Young's Literal Translation	Together—on the dust they lie down, And the worm doth cover them over.

We begin this verse with the adverb yachad (יַחַד) [pronounced *YAH-khahd*], which means *together, alike, all together*. Strong's #3162 BDB #403. By virtue of its placement in this verse, this is where the emphasis is. The following action is something which is true of all the illustrations which Job has given. They all experience this alike and together. This is followed by *upon dust* and the 3rd person masculine plural, pausal form of shâka^bv (שָׁכַבּוּ) [pronounced *shaw-KAH^bV*], which means *to lie down*. Strong's #7901 BDB #1011. Again, Job goes with a verb previously used by Zophar (Job 20:11), as he is answering Zophar specifically. Zophar said, **"Upon dust, he [or, she] lies down."** And Job here is saying, "That is quite the astute observation—oh, by the way, everyone eventually lies down upon the dust, dink-head." The word *dink-head* is implied by the tenor of this verse. Now, I am not completely certain that *upon* (עַל) [pronounced *gah*], is the proper use of the preposition (I am not familiar with their burial practices; we would say *in the dust*). Given that Zophar appears to be struggling with the language, and given Job's sarcasm, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that Zophar slightly misused the preposition, and then Job misused it himself as a sly taunt. Our verse should read: **Together, in dust, they lie down.** The idea is simple—whether a man has lived a life of success or a life of misery, their end is the same—they both die. They are both placed into the earth to decay. Barnes: *Job...says that there is no such marked distinction in their life, nor is there any certain indication of their character in their death. Prosperity often attends the wicked as well as the righteous, and the death of the righteous and the wicked resemble each other.*⁶⁴

Second line is the wâw conjunction and the feminine singular noun rimmâh (רִמְיָה) [pronounced *rim-MAW*], which means *worm*. The Hebrews tended to use this noun in the collective sense, so we would often translate it *worms*, even though it should literally be rendered *worm*. Strong's #7415 BDB #942. The main verb is the 3rd person feminine singular, Piel imperfect of kâçâh (כָּסָה) [pronounced *kaw-SAWH*] and it means *to cover, to clothe, to*

⁶⁴ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 357.

conceal. The Piel meanings are *to cover, to clothe, to spread over, to overwhelm*. Strong's #3680 BDB #491. This is followed by *upon them*, giving us: **...and the worm covers [or, overwhelms] over him**. Everyone is treated alike in the grave. Those who were rich and successful; those who died bitter and without; they are all laid into the ground and the worms permeate their bodies. Barnes: *They shall alike moulder back to dust. There is no distinction in the grave, there is no difference in the manner in which they moulder back to dust. No argument can be drawn respecting their character from the divine dealings towards them when in life—none from the manner of their death—none from the mode in which they moulder back to dust.*⁶⁵

Zodhiates summarizes this with: *Due to their false presuppositions about Job's suffering, Job's friends were unable to determine why some people never have trouble while some never have anything else. Job acknowledges that even though some are prosperous and some are not, they both have the same end—death.*⁶⁶ Solomon summarizes this with: **It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean, and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is afraid to swear. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead (Eccles. 9:2–3).** Every man, despite how he lives his life, dies. That is an inescapable fact.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

The Flaws of the Arguments of Job's Companions

This next verse is the verse which tells us that what Job has presented and the refuted, is the thinking of his three companions. Recall that in v. 19, Job said some things which he did not believe. I inserted, *You might be thinking or you might suggest*. This verse vindicates my interpretation. Job tells them—after naming their thoughts and then arguing against those thoughts—that he knows what they are thinking. He continues to prove that he knows what they are thinking by naming their thoughts in the next verse

**Behold, I know your thoughts and purposes
against me, you are vehement.**

Job
21:27

**Listen, I know your thoughts and purposes
against me—you treat [me] violently.**

Look, I know your thinking and your purpose—you act with violence against me.

Job has concluded that the end of all unbelievers, blessed or not, is the same, and now grabs them by the collar with *behold*. However, first let's see what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)	Oh, I know your thoughts, And the tactics you will devise against me.
Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	Behold I know your thoughts And the stratagems with which you overpower me!
NASB	"Behold, I know your thoughts, And the plans by which you would wrong me."
REB	I know well what you are thinking and the arguments you are marshaling against me;...
The Septuagint	So I know you, that you presumptuously attack me;...
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Lo, I have known your thoughts, And the devices against me ye do wrongfully.

We begin with *behold, I know*, followed by the feminine singular noun *mach^ēshā^vvâh* (מַחֲשָׁבוֹת) [pronounced *makh-SHAW^ē-vawth*] [or, *mah-KHĀSHEH-veth*, New Englishman's Concordance; or, *makh-ash-EH-beth*, Strong's]; which means *thought, device, plan, purpose*. This is from whence (I think) we derive the word *machinations*. Strong's #4284 BDB #364. This gives us: **Listen, I know your thoughts [or, machinations]...**

⁶⁵ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 357.

⁶⁶ The Complete Word Study Old Testament; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 1347.

Barnes: *That is, "I see that you are not satisfied, and that you are disposed still to maintain your former position. They will be ready to ask, Where are the proofs of the prosperity of the wicked? Where are the palaces of the mighty? Where are the dwelling places of the ungodly men!"*⁶⁷

This verse appears to be one thought and there does not appear to be a second line (*that*, or the determination of where to separate the two lines is difficult). The next word is the wâw conjunction and the feminine plural noun m^ezimmâh (מַצִּימָה) [pronounced *m^ezim-MAW*], which means *purpose, discretion, device*. Strong's #4209 BDB #273. This is followed by *against me*. Then we have the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of châmaç (חָמַץ) [pronounced *khaw-MAHSS*], primarily means *to be eager, to be vehement [but generally in a negative and violent way]*. By application, it means *to violate, to treat violently, to wrong, to shake violently, to tear off from oneself, to tear away violently*. We will leave it at that, even though I am not 100% comfortable with the conclusion. It is important to note that this word generally has an object, with the exception of this passage. Strong's #2554 BDB #329. This gives us: **Listen, I know your thoughts and purposes against me, you are vehement**. Most have chosen to split this verse by the wâw conjunction, which would give us: **Listen, I know your thoughts; and you vehemently plot against me [with your] purposes**. Personally, although I would lean toward generally splitting up a verse with the wâw conjunction, in this case, I have a difficult time stringing the words together to make a sensible English sentence without inserting several extra words, and/or changing up the verb somewhat.

Job takes the responsibility right around to his three companions—he knows their evil thoughts, their machinations, their purposes against him. He is aware that they are vehement in their thinking and purposes against him. He also knows that he has not yet satisfied their thinking, despite the excellent arguments that he has presented. Therefore, Job will deal with more of their unexpressed thoughts, first stating their thoughts, and then refuting them.

Barnes: *That is...the course of sophisticated argument which you pursue, the tendency and design of which is to prove that I am a wicked man. You artfully lay down the position, that the wicked must be, and are in fact, overwhelmed with calamities, and then you infer, that because I am overwhelmed in this manner, I must be wicked man.*⁶⁸

**For you [all] say, 'Where [is] [the] house of
[the] generous?'**
**and, 'Where [is] [the] tent—temporary
dwellings of lawless ones?'**

Job
21:28

**For you say, 'Where [is] the house of the
generous man?'**
**And where [is] the tent—the temporary
dwelling places of the corrupt?'**

**The question you have asked is, 'Which house appears to belong to the philanthropist
and which house appears to be the dwelling of the corrupt?'**

First before we exegete this verse, understand that none of Job's companions have made the statement which we find here. Job tells us that this is what they are thinking. Now let's see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	For ye say, Where is the house of the noble-minded? And where the dwelling tent of the lawless?
JPS (Tanakh)	You will say, "Where is the house of the great man— And where the tent in which the wicked dwelled?"
Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	When you say: Where is the house of the tyrant, And where [is] the pavilions of the wicked—:
NASB	"For you say, 'Where is the house of the nobleman, And where is the tent, the dwelling places of the wicked?'
The Septuagint	...so that ye will say, 'Where is the house of the prince? And where is the covering of the tabernacles of the ungodly?'

⁶⁷ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 357.*

⁶⁸ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 357.*

Young's Literal Translation For ye say, 'Where is the house of the noble? And where the tent— The tabernacle of the wicked?'

This begins simply enough: *For you [all] say*, followed by the content of what they say. We begin with the interrogative adverb *ʿayyêch* (אָיֵךְ) [pronounced *ahy-YAY*], which means *where*. Strong's #346 BDB #32. This is followed by the masculine singular construct of *house* which is closely associated with the masculine singular adjective *nâdîy^v* (נָדִיב) [pronounced *naw-DEE^v*], which means ❶ *voluntary, willing, spontaneous, ready* (Ex. 35:5, 22 || 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). Strong's #5081 BDB #622. This gives us: '*Where is the house of the generous?*' Zophar has blasted Job, and his charges are unfair and exploitive business practices which Job has allegedly practiced (from whence is his wealth). Job has a front of being a philanthropist, but behind it was plain and simple greed for himself. So Job says that he knows the thinking of his associates—their first question, "Just where exactly is the home of a man who is known for his generosity?" Would not God bless such a one? So, where is the evidence of God's great blessing?

The second question is introduced by the *wâw* conjunction and *ʿayyêch* once again, and the masculine singular noun *ʿohel* (אֹהֶל) [pronounced *OH-heh*] is translated *tent, tabernacle, house*. This appears to either be a temporary residence (and hence, not too well-built or designed) or an inferior type residence to the use of *house* above. The Vulgate leaves out this word. Strong's #168 BDB #13. This is followed by the masculine plural construct of *mîsh^kkân* (מִשְׁכָּן) [pronounced *mish^k-KAWN*], which means *residence, dwelling place, tent, tabernacle, abode*. This appears to be a semi-permanent structure, like our modern-day trailer home in function. You will note that Keil and Delitzsch render this *pavilion*. This threw me for a bit, so I looked it up. The first definition, *a light, usually open building used for shelter, concerts, exhibits, etc.* is what I thought of. However, one of the secondary meanings of this word is *a large and elaborate tent*. This is how we should understand this word. Keil and Delitzsch add: *Even in the present day, a Beduin, as he approaches an encampment, knows the tent of the sheikh immediately; it is denoted by its size, often also by the lances planted at the door, and also, as is easily imagined, by the rich arrangement of cushions and carpets.*⁶⁹ Strong's #4908 BDB #1015. This is followed by the word of the book of Job—the masculine plural adjective *râshâ^c* (רָשָׁעִים) [pronounced *raw-SHAWG*], which means *malevolent, lawless, corrupt, criminal*. Strong's #7563 BDB #957. This gives us: *And where [is the] tent—temporary dwellings of lawless [men]?*

The idea is fairly simple here. They are judging by the conditions of Job and making determinations as to his soul based upon what they have observed. What they are doing is pointing to a house and saying, "A godly man lives there" and pointing to another, saying, "And a corrupt businessman lives there." They have made their determination based upon external appearances, despite the fact that Job has just given several examples and scenarios which do not match their suppositions. The obvious application is that we are not to judge mankind based upon external appearances. In fact, in most cases, we are not to judge others at all. However, it should be clear that you cannot find a successful businessman and thereby assume that he is moral and upright in all his dealings; and, similarly, point to a failure or to a man who is poor, and determine that God is disciplining him for his arrogance and/or his sins. We have no idea exactly who God is dealing with or what God is doing with individuals. Furthermore, Job's abode now and his abode the previous month would have been judged differently. Recall from Job 1:3: *His possessions also were 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 asses, and many servants, and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.* Had his friends looked at his life and his house at that time, they would have been convinced that he was a righteous and holy man (which Job was). However, a week or so later, after Job's sons and daughters had all died; after his ranches and grazing land had been raided and he was himself covered with skin cancer, scraping off his skin with a piece of pottery while he sat on a heap of ashes; then his friends formed a completely different opinion of him.

⁶⁹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, p. 470.

There is another application as well: some automatically reject as friends and as partners those who are less successful than they and those who are of a different social strata than they. Our basic connection is that we are all family of God and that we will be family of God with other believers forever. Those who are your social equals—if they are not believers—will be like blips on a radar screen. This does not mean that you must socialize with all believers, nor does it mean that you should socialize exclusively with believers. However, you should not treat as different or look down upon believers because they have a job which you view as inferior to yours, or because they make considerably less money than you do. These are non issues within the family of God. And, although we are not called to socialism, the early church, when under heavy persecution for what they believed, held all things in common. In other words, they shared all that God had given them, because clearly all that you have by way of material possessions were given to you by God.

**Have you not questioned travelers of roads?
And their signs—you do not acknowledge
them?**

Job
21:29

**Have you not questioned the road travelers?
Do you not acknowledge [and consider] their
signs?**

And what about those who live as nomads? Is there a way to determine their moral character?

Now Job asks his friends about those who do not have houses and asks their opinion of them (this is a rhetorical question). First the other translations:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Have ye not asked the passers-by in the way? And <their signs> can ye not recognize?
JPS (Tanakh)	You must have consulted the wayfarers; You cannot deny their evidence.
NASB	“Have you not asked wayfaring men, And do you not recognize their witness [lit., signs]?”
NIV	Have you never questioned those who travel? Have you paid no regard to their accounts?
Owen’s translation	Have you not asked those who travel roads and their testimony (signs) do you not accept?
The Septuagint	Ask those that go by the way, and do not disown their tokens.
<i>Young’s Literal Translation</i>	Have ye not asked those passing by the way? And their signs do ye not know?

Job’s friends have drawn a lot of false conclusions and Job asks them about how in depth did they study these conclusions. We begin with the interrogative particle *hă* (ה) [pronounced *heh*], which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence so that you immediately recognize that what we have here is a question. We often use some form of the verb *to be* along with a question mark at the end to indicate that this is the word found in the Hebrew. Strong’s #none BDB #209. With this is the negative particle and the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal perfect of *shâ`al* (שאל) [pronounced *shaw-AHL*], which means *to ask, to petition, to request, to inquire, to question, to interrogate*. Strong’s #7592 BDB #981. Together, this would be: “Have you not questioned...?”

This is followed by the masculine plural construct, Qal active participle of *â`var* (אָוַר) [pronounced *gaw^b-VAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. As a masculine plural construct, Qal participle, it acts as a noun and means *those passing through, travelers*. Strong’s #5674 BDB #716. This is followed by the masculine singular noun *derek* (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced *DEH-rek^g*], which means *way, distance, road, journey, manner, course*. Strong’s #1870 BDB #202. “Have you not questioned travelers of the road?” Their generalizations seemed to only have application if one was once rich and then they became poor. You could observe their house and determine their status with God.

The idea in this first line is that this—the prosperity of those who are wicked—is the case everywhere in this world. Simply ask the travelers, and they can substantiate this.

In the second line, we have *and* plus the upside-down question mark followed by the feminine plural noun *ʾôth* (אֹת) [pronounced *oath*], which means *sign, token, pledge, assurance*. Strong's #226 BDB #16. With this is the 3rd person masculine plural suffix. This is followed by a negative and the 2nd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect of *nâkar* (נָכַר) [pronounced *naw-KAHR*], and it means *to regard, to recognize, to acknowledge*. This word is not found in the Qal. Strong's #5234 BDB #647. This gives us: *...and their signs [or, assurances] you do not acknowledge?* Job's life and troubles were a positive, sure sign to his three associates. However, were they not able to interpret the signs of travelers?

Barnes: *[What is meant here is] signs, or intimations which they have given of the actual state of things in other countries, perhaps by the inscriptions, records, and proverbs, by which they had signified the result of their inquiries.*⁷⁰ The idea is, perhaps Job's three associates have limited knowledge of the outside world; however, there have been men who have traveled throughout the ancient world, and by the information that they have gathered, it is clear that you cannot judge a man's godliness by the house in which he lives.

**For to a day of calamity, is spared an evil one;
to a day of outbursts of fury, they are carried
along.**

Job
21:30

**For [even] to the day of misfortune, the evil
person is spared;
to the day of God's outbursts of fury, they are
carried along.**

**Even in a calamitous day, the evil person might be spared;
and they are sustained during a day of God's fury.**

Let's see what others have done first:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	That <to the day of calamity is the wicked reserved, <To the day of indignant visitation> are they led.
JPS (Tanakh)	For the evil man is spared on the day of calamity, On the day when wrath is led forth.
Keil and Delitzsch	That the wicked was spared in the day of calamity, In the day of the outburst of wrath they were led away.
NASB	"For the wicked is reserved for the day of calamity; They will be led forth at the day of fury."
The Septuagint	For the wicked hasten to the day of destruction; they will be led away for the day of His vengeance.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	That to a day of calamity is the wicked spared. To a day of wrath they are brought.

As you observe, we have some slight differences here, which all add up to slightly different interpretations. We begin with the conjunction *that, for, when, because*; followed by the lamed preposition (*to, for*).⁷¹ This is followed by *a day of* and the masculine singular noun *ʾêyd* (אֵיֶד) [pronounced *ayd*], which means *a burden or a load [by which one is crushed], a heavy misfortune, distress, calamity*. Strong's #343 BDB #15. Then we have the 3rd person masculine singular, Niphal (passive) imperfect of *châsak* (חָשַׁק) [pronounced *khaw-SAHK*], which means *to hold in, to restrain, to preserve, to keep safely from something, to withhold, to refrain*. Strong's #2820 BDB #362. This is followed by the masculine singular adjective *raʿ* (רַע) [pronounced *rahg*] and it means *evil, bad*. Strong's #7451 BDB #948. This gives us: **For to a day of misfortune, [the] evil one is preserved.** It appears as though this can be taken in two ways: (1) God preserves the evil person for the day of calamity; that is, there is a day in the future when God will judge the infidel, and that is the point that Job is making in this first line.⁷² (2) Or,

⁷⁰ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 358.

⁷¹ On the one hand, Keil and Delitzsch mention that this *that* is a continuation of the thinking of Job's companions (that is, it continues v. 28); however, that does not fit in with the context of the passage (this verse appears to be more Job's observations) and Keil and Delitzsch do not translate this verse in the manner that they allude to either.

⁷² This appears to be Barnes' position, although it is difficult to tell.

antithetically, that God preserves the evil one during a catastrophe.⁷³ Context seems to dictate the second interpretation (the second line appears to affirm that second interpretation), but the actual words found in this verse appear to support the first. The use of the lamed preposition at the beginning denotes that someone is being reserved for something in the future. Therefore, Job appears to be speaking of the final day of judgment rather than any day of calamity. That a calamitous judgment awaits the infidel is Job's point, even though that same infidel often weathers many serious storms in life. That there would be a final distribution of God's judgment is herein affirmed; however, *when that time would be, or what were his exact views in reference to the future judgment, is not certain intimated. It is clear, however, from this discussion, that he supposed it would be beyond death, for he says that the wicked are prospered in this life; that they go down to the grave and sleep in the tomb; that the clods of the valley are sweet unto them, yet that the judgment, the just retribution, would certainly come.*⁷⁴ Now to us, this may not seem like much, but there is no clear indication in Scripture written prior to this concerning a day of judgment to come.

The second line begins with *to a day of*; and then we have the feminine plural noun עִבְרָה (ʿēḇrâh) [pronounced ġeḇv^ē-RAW], which means *an outburst of anger, overflow of fury, overflowing rage, overflow, arrogance, fury*. The KJV pretty consistently renders this *wrath*. The idea appears to be that someone stores up this anger, fury and wrath for a long time, and then suddenly lets it all out. The plural may refer more to an intensity of wrath, rather than to a multiplicity of wrath's. Strong's #5678 BDB #720. This is followed by the 3rd person masculine plural, Hophal imperfect of יָבַל (yāḇal) [pronounced yah^b-VAWL], which means *to carry along [often in a procession], to be borne along, to be led [often in a procession], to be led away [sometimes out of danger]*. This verb is used for God leading his people from captivity in Babylon (Isa. 55:12 Jer. 31:9). The Hophal is the passive of the Hiphil (causative stem). God is causing these men to be borne aloft or to be carried (we used the same form of this verb back in Job 10:19). Strong's #2966 BDB #384. *...To a day of outbursts of fury, they are caused to be carried along.* The idea is that, even until God's final days of wrath, they are borne along, not in misery, but in relative comfort and happiness. In other words, Job is not saying that the wicked are led away to God's great day of wrath, but that God carries them as sort of an Honorable Escort. That is, we know that the infidel will eventually get his due—however, that does not mean that they do or don't suffer here on earth. God might carry them along reasonably well in security and prosperity. They might face pain and rejection and wrath in the future; however, right at this time, God is simply carrying them along. This contradicts Zophar's point of view directly.

We are not speaking of the tribulation in this verse, but of the final judgment. Certainly, God brings forth great catastrophe upon this earth. It might be by way of a local flood or an earthquake; in any case, during a natural disaster, there are men who are patently evil in their ways and thoughts who seem to weather the storm quite well. I have personally seen many storms blow through Houston; storms which have caused people great pain and misery—however, not every evil person was taken out by these storms and floods. Not every evil person suffered loss. In some cases, God appeared to carry along some of the wicked in the midst of the storm. However, He is preserving them until their final judgment.

Barnes sums up with: *They shall be led or conducted—as one is to execution. This appears as if Job held to the doctrine of future retribution...This passage, therefore, seems to be decisive to prove that he held to a state of retribution beyond the grave, where the inequalities of the present life would be corrected, and where men, though prospered here, would be treated as they deserved. This, he says, was the current opinion. It was that which was brought by travelers who had gone into other lands...[furthermore], it is as true now as it was then; and this solution, which could come only from revelation, settles all inquiries about the rectitude of the divine administration in the dispensation of rewards and punishments.*⁷⁵

⁷³ This is how it is interpreted by Rosenmüller, Noyes, and Schultens.

⁷⁴ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 358.

⁷⁵ *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 358–359.

Barnes continues: *[This] answers the question, "How is it consistent for God to bestow so many blessings on the wicked, while his own people are so much afflicted?" The answer is, they have their good things in this life, and in the future world all these inequalities will be rectified.*⁷⁶

**Who will make conspicuous against his faces
his way
and he [even] he has done what he requites
to him.**

Job
21:31

**Who will make his way clear before him?
And who will recompense to him [for that
which] he has done?**

**Who will confront him with his actions?
Who will pay back this man for the wrong which he has done?**

I have to admit that, at least from Owen's rendering, the Job is losing me here. Here are what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)	Who will upbraid him to his face? Who will require him for what he has done?
NASB	"Who will confront him with his actions, And who will repay him for what he has done?"
NIV	Who denounces his conduct to his face? Who repays him for what he has done?
Owen's Translation	Who declares to his face his way for what he has done; who requites him?
The Septuagint	Who will tell him his way to his face, whereas he has done <i>it</i> ? Who will recompense him?
Young's Literal Translation	Who doth declare to his face his way? And for that which he hath done, Who doth give recompense to him?

The general meaning seems to be best given by the NIV. We begin this first line with the interrogative particle *mîy* (מִי) [pronounced *mee*], which is generally translated *who*. Strong's #4310 BDB #566. This is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that*. Since this verb is only found in the Hiphil and the Hophal, there are no adjustments to be made to the meaning. Strong's #5046 BDB #616. Then we have the preposition *ʿal* (עַל) [pronounced *gahl*], which means *upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside*. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752. Here, it is used with the masculine plural noun *pânîym* (פָּנִים) [pronounced *paw-NEEM*], which means *face*. This word is in the plural, referring to the several features of the face. With *ʿal*, it means *facing, in front of, before (as in preference to), in addition to, overlooking*. This is followed by *His way* (the capital *h*, of course, is by interpretation). This gives us: **Who will make conspicuous in front of him [or, to his face] his way?** I originally interpret that *h* as capitalized, indicating *God's way for man*; however, in looking over the context, Job is asking who will make clear to the wicked man his deeds and his actions; the road he has chosen to take. The idea is, these various men live out their various lives in a plethora of circumstances, and who exactly is going to make clear to them their wrong? In life, they don't need (in their own minds) God, nor do they need to follow His ways. They have been successful in all that they have done without Him. This is the common thinking of most men. If they have been prospered, if they have been successful, then they do not see a reason that they should know God (conversely, if their lives are fraught with frustration, they often blame God). Job asks, "Who is going to make their own ways clear to them?" Now, the reason that *his* is not capitalized is that we are speaking of judgment after life has passed; therefore, teaching them God's way is superfluous. Telling them that they should believe in Jesus for eternal life is no longer relevant, since that time is past. It is like someone saying, "Well, this is what you should have done." Anyone can tell you what you should have done in any situation. At the last judgment, God makes clear why they are lost and why they will remain separate from God (if a person chooses to keep God at arm's length throughout his entire life, it would be incongruous for them to choose to spend eternity with God).

⁷⁶ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 359.

In the second line, we begin with the wâw conjunction, the 3rd person masculine singular personal pronoun (which is used primarily for emphasis, and the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of ʿâsâh (הַעֲשֵׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. Then we have the interrogative particle again, which means *who*; followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect of shâlêm (שָׁלַם) [pronounced *shaw-LAME*] and it means *to recompense, to repay, to restore, to complete, to make perfect, to requite*. In the Piel, this means *to make secure, to keep safe, to complete, to finish, to restore, to requite, to recompense*. Strong's #7999 BDB #1022. This verse ends with *to him* (or, *for him*). This gives us: **And he [even he] has done; who will restore to him?** This can be turned around, somewhat, and yield: **And who will recompense to him [for what] he has done?** I must admit to being a little uncomfortable with the final translation, upon which the interpretation is based, but it appears as though Job is asking, “Who will properly recompense this man for his days of evil?”

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

The Rich Infidel Even Enjoys a Marvelous Funeral

**And he to graves is borne
and over a heap, he watches.**

Job
21:32

**And he is carried to the graveyard
while one watches over [his] heap [i.e., his
grave site].**

And the infidel is carried off to the graveyard while someone watches over his grave site.

Let's see what others have done first:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Yet he <to the graves> is borne, And <over the tomb> one keepeth watch;...
JPS (Tanakh)	He is brought to the grave, While a watch is kept at his tomb.
KJV	Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.
NASB	“While he is carried to the grave, Men will keep watch over his tomb.”
NKJV	Yet he shall be brought to the grave, And a vigil kept over the tomb.
Septuagint	And he has been led away to the tombs, and he has watched over the heaps.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And he—to the graves he is brought. And over the heap a watch is kept.

We begin with *and he* (the emphatic use of the personal pronoun again). This is followed by *to graves*, which is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Hophal imperfect of ya^bval again. Ya^bval (יָבַל) [pronounced *yah^b-VAWL*] means *to be carried along [often in a procession], to be borne aloft, to be led [often in a procession]*. Strong's #2966 BDB #384. This gives us: **And he is carried to [the] graves.** Job describes the end of this particular example—the man who is successful, yet an infidel. At his death, his body is carried to the grave site (in the Hebrew, called *graves*).

Barnes: *He is brought with honour and prosperity to the grave. He is not cut down by manifest divine displeasure for his sins. He is conducted to the grave as other men are, notwithstanding his enormous wickedness...he [is]...not overwhelmed with calamity, as the friends of Job had maintained, and that nothing could be determined in regard to his character from the divine dealings toward him in this life.*⁷⁷

The second line begins with the wâw conjunction, the preposition *upon, over, above* followed by the masculine singular noun gâdîysh (גַּדִּיֵּשׁ) [pronounced *gaw-DEESH*], which means *tomb*. Actually, it is only found here with this particular meaning and there is no other cognate which clearly points to this meaning. Some have suggested a different noun belongs here (shortening it to gedesh), but that begs the question and does not give us a noun which has a clear meaning of *tomb*. This noun really means *stack, heap*. Now, in our modern burials, we have a mound (or a *heap*) of dirt by where the body will be buried, and there is nothing wrong with so interpreting this

⁷⁷ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 359.

noun here (it is only found in Ex. 22:6 Judges 15:5 Job 5:26 21:32). Strong's #1430 BDB #155. Then we have the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of shâqad (שָׁקַד) [pronounced *shaw-KAHD*], which means to watch, to wake. Strong's #8245 BDB #1052. **And [one] keeps watch over [the] heap.**

Now, I have made this fall neatly into place, but there has been no little disagreement as to the translation of this second line:

Jerome	And he will watch over the tombs.
Professor Lee	For the tomb was he watchful
Noyes	Yet he still survives upon his tomb.
The Septuagint	And he will watch over the tombs [or, <i>he will cause a watch to be kept over his tomb</i>]
Wemyss	They watch over his tomb.

Barnes: *the general meaning is not difficult. It is, that he should be honoured even in his death; that he would live in prosperity, and be buried with magnificence. There would be nothing in his death or burial which would certainly show that God regarded him as a wicked man.*⁷⁸

All the proper protocol falls into place. When a rich man dies, even if he was an infidel, even his funeral service is carried out as though he were important and moral. He is carried aloft to his grave while one keeps watch over the grave site. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that guards of honor are placed at his grave site day and night, which they call an assumed ancient custom, but one which has not been proven to be true.⁷⁹ Barnes indicates that a grave was made with a heap of dirt or stones, which acted as a monument; and that the verb refers to a watch or a wake kept over this grave site, which would serve either as a proof of affection or to keep the grave site in good condition. Given this, Barnes concludes: *The wicked man was often honourably buried; that a monument was reared to his memory; and that every mark of attention was paid to him after he was dead...The wicked man often dies in a palace, and with all the comforts that every clime⁸⁰ can furnish to alleviate his pain, and to sooth him in his dying moments. He lies upon a bed of down; friends attend him with unwearied care; the skill of medicine is exhausted to restore him, and there is every indication of grief at his death. So in the place of his burial, a monument of finest marble, sculptured with all the skill of art, is reared over his grave. An inscription, beautiful as taste can make it, proclaims his virtues to the traveler and the stranger. Friends go and plant roses over his grave, that breath forth their odors around the spot where he lies. Who, from the dying scene, the funeral, the monument, the attendants, would suppose that he was a man whom God abhorred, and whose soul was already in hell? This is the argument of Job, and of its solidity no one can doubt.*⁸¹

**Sweet to him clods of [the] valley
and after him, all man is drawn [along]
and before his faces [there are] an
innumerable [number of people].**

Job
21:33

**The clods of the valley are sweet to him;
and all men are drawn in after him,
and in his sight, [the number of men is]
innumerable.**

**The clods of dirt thrown upon him are sweet to him.
Men from all over are drawn to his funeral
and the number of men present are innumerable.**

Let's first see what others have done with this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	The clods of the wadi are sweet to him, Everyone follows behind him, innumerable are those who precede him.
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⁷⁸ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 359.

⁷⁹ Keil & Delitzsch's Commentary on the Old Testament; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, p. 471.

⁸⁰ This means either a tract or region of the earth; or, climate. I'm only quoting Barnes, I don't understand its use here.

⁸¹ Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 360.

NASB	“The clods of the valley will gently cover him [lit., <i>be sweet to him</i>]; Moreover, all men will follow [lit., <i>draw</i>] after him, While countless ones go before him.
The Septuagint	The stones of the valley have been sweet to him, and every man will depart after him, and innumerable [men are] before him.
Young's Literal Translation	Sweet to him have been the clods of the valley, And after him every man he draweth, And before him there is no numbering.

This verse begins with a verb—the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal perfect of *māthaq* (מִתְחַק) [pronounced *maw-THAHK*], which means *to become sweet, to be sweet, to be pleasant*. Strong's #4985 & #4988 BDB #608. With this verb, Job continues answering Zophar directly (Zophar used this verb back in Job 20:12). This is followed by *to him* (referring to the rich, successful and dead infidel). What is sweet to him is the masculine plural construct of *regeḇ* (רֵגֶב) [pronounced *REH-ge^BV*], which means *a clod [of earth]*. Strong's #7263 BDB #918. What follows is the masculine singular noun *nachal* (נַחַל) [pronounced *NAHKH-al*], which means *brook, torrent*. *Valley* is a reasonable rendering here. Strong's #5158 BDB #636. This, again, is another word used by Zophar in the previous chapter. *Nachal* is in its pausal form, meaning that the first line here ends and should read: **Clods of [the] valley are sweet to him**. The picture is of burying this infidel and he finds the dirt sweet as it is thrown upon him. Keil and Delitzsch offers a lot of opinions upon death and burial in the ancient world, essentially concluding that we do not know the customs of Job's time and place. However, if one were to go around the world today, there would be a plethora of ways that man deals with the dead—it is not farfetched to think that man may have dealt with the dead in many different ways in the various ancient cultures as well (in fact, there is no reason to assume that any given culture treated all of their burials the same, which, essentially, is what this passage maintains).

We have the *wāw* conjunction next, followed by *after him all man* (occasionally, a Hebrew noun is used in the singular, when it refers to a plural concept). The main verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *māshak* (מָשַׁךְ) [pronounced *maw-SHAHK^e*], which means, in general, *to draw out, to drag, to continue with something, to proceed to, to march to*. Strong's #4900 BDB #604. At his funeral, men are drawn to march after him. **And after him, all [manner of] man is drawn [along]**. The other suggested interpretation of this verse is that all men are drawn into the grave after him (as well as before him). I don't agree with the second interpretation (although it is certainly a true statement), as we have the words *after him* and *drawn along*. There is nothing about the burial of the infidel which causes men to be drawn after him in death. All men will die and be similarly laid to rest; however, there is nothing about the infidel or his death which causes this. Hence, the idea of a funeral procession is more suited to this context, with men walking in front and behind. Furthermore, men may be drawn to his grave site in later years as well. In our time, there are certain celebrities whose lives were filled with immorality, who draw people to their grave site long after they have died. And, in doing this, they honor the dead, despite the life that they led. Job says that this occurs all of the time with respect to rich and successful infidels. The Bible is not some ancient book with thoughts and observations which are irrelevant to our life today. What we find here is as up-to-date as any book that is available to us.

In the third and final line of this verse, we have: *...and before his faces [i.e., in his sight]...* and then we have the negative substantive construct of *'ayin* (אֵין) [pronounced *AH-yin*], which means *naught, nothing*. Again, this was used in the previous chapter. Strong's #369 BDB #34. This is affixed to *miç^ephâr* (מִיִּצְפֹּה) [pronounced *mis^e-FAWR*] means *number, counted, numerical total, a recounting*. With the negational construct, it means *innumerable*. Strong's #4557 BDB #708. This gives us: **...and before his faces (or, in his sight—recall, of course, that this guy is dead) innumerable**. The idea is that the funeral is wonderful; even the clods of dirt thrown upon his face are sweet to him (I have assumed that their burial practices are not too dissimilar to ours here). All men are drawn to his funeral and the men at his funeral cannot even be numbered.

Job 21:31–33—A Messianic Passage?

An interesting set of verses, when taken together, are vv. 31–34; when I change all the references of *he* to a capitalized *He*, what do they conjure up to you?

Job 21:31–33—A Messianic Passage?

Job 21:31	Who will make His way clear before His face? And who will repay Him [for that which] He has done?
Job 21:32	And He is carried to the grave while He watches over [His] heap [i.e., <i>His grave site</i>].
Job 21:33	The clods of the valley [i.e., <i>the results of death</i>] are sweet to Him; and all men are drawn in after Him, and in His sight, [the number of men is] innumerable.
I am one of those who believes that, periodically, the Holy Spirit inserts that which may be taken as a Messianic passage, even though it has never before been recognized as such. Perhaps this is His way of telling us, <i>This is the Word of God</i> .	

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

**And how you comfort me vacuously;
and [from] your answers remains
faithlessness.”**

Job
21:34

**And how empty [is your] compassion [toward]
me;
and faithlessness is left behind [in] your
answers.”**

**How empty and meaningless is the compassion you have shown towards me,
as your statements are filled with faithlessness.”**

First let's see how others handled this final verse of the second round of talks.

JPS (Tanakh)	Why then do you offer me empty consolations? Of your replies only the perfidy remains.
NASB	“How then will you vainly comfort me, For your answers remain <i>full of falsehood</i> ?”
NIV	“So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!”
The Septuagint	How then do you comfort me in vain? Whereas, I have had no rest from your molestation.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And how do ye comfort me <i>with vanity</i> , And in your answers hath been left trespass?

This is Job's conclusion. He has offered up different scenarios which contradict what his three associates have been selling—but primarily that of a godless but successful man who even enjoys a pleasant funeral. This verse begins with the wâw conjunction and the interrogative adverb ʿêyk (עַיִךְ) [pronounced *ayche*], which means *how*. It can be used as an interrogative or as an exclamation. Strong's #349 BDB #32. Then we have the main verb—the 2nd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect, 1st person singular suffix of nâcham (נָחַם) [pronounced *naw-KHAHM*] and it means *to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to have compassion, to be sorry, to suffer grief*. It is only found in the Niphal and the Piel. Strong's #5162 BDB #636. Then we have a masculine singular noun in its pausal form used as an adverb—he^bvel (הַבֵּל) [pronounced *HEH^b-vel*], which means *vapor, breath, unsubstantial, emptiness, meaningless, vacuous, idols*. Strong's #1892 BDB #210. This gives us: **And how you comfort me vacuously**. This is simple to understand—Job's three so-called friends provided him with no comfort; what they gave him was empty comfort. They have shown him empty compassion.

In the second line, we have the wâw conjunction with the feminine plural of t^eshûw^bvâh (תְּשׁוּבָה) [pronounced *t^e-shoo^b-VAW*], which means *a return, an answer*. Strong's #8666 BDB #1000. With that is the 2nd person masculine plural suffix. Then we have the 3rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect of shâ`ar (שָׁאָר) [pronounced *shâ`ar*].

[pronounced *shaw-AHR*], which means, in the Hiphil, *to let remain, to leave over, to leave behind*; in the Niphal, *to remain, to be left over*. Strong's #7604 BDB #983. Finally, we have the subject of the verb, the masculine singular noun *ma'al* (מַאֲל) [pronounced *MAH-gahl*], which means *infraction, transgression, faithlessness*. Strong's #4604 BDB #591. This gives us: **And faithlessness remains [from] your answers**. Job's three associates reveal nothing but their own person lack of faith and personal transgressions by their treatment of him.

In this verse, Job upbraids his three associates for feigning compassion towards him, but providing nothing of the sort. What they have done is excoriated him with their statements and speeches, which comments come from a vantage point of faithlessness. They have no faith in God and they cannot even correctly observe and comment on the world around them. **"Sorry comforters are you all!"** (Job 16:2b).

Barnes: *How can you be qualified to give me consolation in my trials, who have such erroneous views of the government and dealings of God? True consolation could be founded only on correct views of the divine government; but such views, Job says, they had not. With their conceptions of the divine administration, they could not administer to him any real consolation. We may learn hence, (1.) That all real consolation in trial must be based on correct apprehensions of the divine character and plans. Falsehood, delusion, error, can give no permanent comfort. (2.) They whose office it is to administer consolation to the afflicted, should seek after the truth about God and His government. They should endeavour to learn why He afflicts men, what purpose He proposes to accomplish, and what are the proper ends of trial. They should have an unwavering conviction that He is right, and should see as far as possible why He is right, before they attempt to comfort others. Their own souls should be imbued with the fullest conviction that all the ways of God are holy, and then they should go and endeavour to pour their convictions into other hearts, and make them feel so too. A minister of the gospel, who has unsettled, erroneous, or false views of the character and government of God, is poorly qualified for his station, and will be a "miserable comforter" to those who are in trial. Truth alone sustains the soul in affliction. Truth only can inspire confidence in God. Truth only can break the force of sorrow, and enable the sufferer to look up to God and to heaven with confidence and joy.*⁸²

Keil and Delitzsch conclude: *Zophar has painted anew the end of the evil-doer in the most hideous colours, in order that Job might behold himself in this mirror, and be astonished at himself. We see also, from the answer of Job to Zophar's speech, that the passionate excitement which Job displayed at first in opposition to the friends has given place to a calmer tone; he has already got over the first impression of disappointed expectation, and the more confidently certain of the infallibility of divine justice he becomes, the more does he feel raised above his accusers. He now expects no further comfort; careful attention to what he has to say shall henceforth be his consolation. He will also complain against and of men no more, for he has long since ceased to hope for anything for himself from men; his vexation concerns the objective indefensibility of that which his opponents maintain as a primeval law of the divine government in the world. The maxim that godlessness always works its own punishment by a calamitous issue, is by no means supported by experience. One sees godless persons who are determined to know nothing of God, and are at the same time prosperous. It is not to be said that God treasures up the punishment they have deserved for their children. The godless ought rather to bear the punishment themselves, since the destiny of their children no longer concerns them after they have enjoyed their full of life. That law is therefore a precept which human short-sightedness has laid down for God, but one by which, however, He is not guided. The godless who have lived prosperously all their days, and the righteous who have experienced only sorrow, share the common lot of death. One has only to ask persons who have had experience of the world: they can relate instances of notorious sinners who maintained their high position until death, and who, without being overtaken by divine judgments, and without human opposition and contradictions, were carried in honour to the grave, and their memory is immortalized by the monuments erected over their tomb. From this Job infers that the connection into which the friends bring his suffering with supposed guilt, is a false one, and that all their answers are, after all, reducible to an unjust and uncharitable judgments, by which they attack God.*⁸³

⁸² Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 361–362.

⁸³ Keil & Delitzsch's Commentary on the Old Testament; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 4, pp. 473–474.

A reasonable question, at this point, is what of Job's argument? Was it valid? Absolutely. Zophar (along with his two companions) has presented a generalization that when one does wrong on this earth, one is so recompensed for this evil. All Job has to do is to offer up one example of where this is observably not true, and that is what he does. He is not speaking of a specific example here, but of something which has been observed time and time again by him and his friends: that there are rich men who eschew all that is holy, and whose lives are none the worse for taking this position. In the light of this generalization, Job asks his companions, "Are you going to instruct God as to how things should be run on this earth?"

Because of the statements of Zophar in the previous chapter, and the response by Job in this chapter, it would be apropos to go to Psalm 73. Psalm 73 was not written during the time of Job, nor does it pertain directly to the time of Job, but it deals with the same questions and observations raised in these last two chapters. Then, once we finish Psalm 73, we will take up Psalm 10, wherein the psalmist prays for the overthrow of the wicked.

[<<Return to Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

[<<Site Map>>](#)

[<<Return to the Job Homepage>>](#)

[<<Return to Beginning of this Chapter>>](#)

1. And you will note that the *revelations* of charismatics either add nothing substantial to the Word of God or they outright contradict the Word of God.

2. *Barnes' Notes; Job, Volume 1*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 353.