“Will the Lamp of the Wicked Wane?”
The Prosperity of the Wicked as a Theme in Job and the Ancient Near East

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<td><strong>AB</strong></td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<td><strong>AJSL</strong></td>
<td><em>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</em></td>
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<td><strong>AS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>IBC</strong></td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>JAJSup</td>
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Abstract

The book of Job has long been considered the biblical text that is most relevant to the question of theodicy. Therefore, much of its history of interpretation has focused on considering theological explanations for the problem of innocent suffering. The emphasis upon this theodicy theme has not simply developed, but burgeoned over the past two centuries as a result of the discovery and decipherment of ancient Near Eastern compositions that exhibit a “righteous sufferer” motif comparable to that of Job. Thus, the inclination to study the complex, and sometimes perplexing, book of Job from this perspective has continued into the most contemporary scholarship.

This focus on the righteous sufferer, though reasonable, has caused scholars to overlook what considerable sections of the first two rounds of dialogue communicate about the fate of the wicked. Job’s companions persist in citing conventional wisdom based upon tradition to proclaim the destiny of the impious, whereas Job voices his perception of the fate of the wicked based upon his experience. These two modes of explanation lead Job and his friends to diametrically opposed opinions concerning the justice of God. To Job’s friends, justice comes in the form of the wicked consistently suffering divinely-appointed consequences for their sins, which is an outcome they eventually apply to Job as the conversation intensifies. Job reckons his friends’ arguments for consistent retribution to be nonsense, and insists that he would be undeserving of the disproportionate suffering he experiences even within the system of just retribution. Human experience, according to Job, blatantly contradicts the reliability of the friends’ claim to uniformity in retribution and thus, their idea of consistent divine justice is a farce. The opposition between Job and his friends’ crescendos in Job’s definitive response to their claims (ch. 21) in which Job presents his foremost chagrin—the prosperity of the wicked.
Job’s overt allegations relating to the inconsistency of God’s justice, coupled with the notion that the wicked prosper with no divine restraint, is revolutionary when compared to other sections of the Bible. Although Jeremiah manifests an affinity to Job as a result of his personal experience with the wicked, sections of Psalms, Proverbs, and Deuteronomy appear to support Job’s friends’ conventional wisdom by explicitly indicating divinely-appointed rewards for obedience and just retribution for punishment. Not only is the retribution theme shared by other biblical literature, but the expression of this theme is carried out by using similar rhetoric and imagery to those of Job. As one branches out from the Bible to extra-biblical wisdom texts of the ancient Near East, it is readily noticeable that several of the “righteous sufferer” compositions similarly exhibit the prevalence of the doctrine of just retribution by conspicuously utilizing comparable language and imagery to communicate corresponding ideas, and make similar claims to those in Job.

These observations prompt an inquiry into the purpose of Job’s intense emphasis upon the prosperity of the wicked in response to his friends’ retribution dogma. What is the objective of Job arguing against retribution by proclaiming the prosperity of the wicked—an assertion that distinctly runs contrary to traditional biblical and ancient Near Eastern wisdom? This study addresses this question with a particular focus upon considering the rhetoric, imagery, and literary structure of the sections of Job that treat the issue of the fate of the wicked, where the topic is predominantly disputed in the first two rounds of dialogue. In this study, I strive to answer this question by analyzing relevant sections of Job in their biblical and ancient Near Eastern contexts. This analysis is accomplished by focusing on what might be gleaned from the theology, rhetoric, imagery, and structure of biblical and non-biblical texts that could enhance the understanding of the passages in Job. I argue that as the dialogues progress, it becomes increasingly evident that
the characters of Job masterfully utilize language and imagery that circulated in the ancient Near Eastern literary world to buttress their respective points.

Job’s ultimate response in chapter 21 is a skillfully crafted rebuke that expressly invokes his friends’ accusations of his guilt leading up to that point. Job emphatically repudiates the universality of just retribution by playing on his companions’ language to respond to their specific comments, while interacting with the biblical and extra-biblical literary world around him. In this manner, Job accuses his companions of being unfaithful to him and God for having valued their tradition more than empirical evidence.

The following is a summary of each of the seven chapters of this dissertation, indicating the subject material discussed, along with a summary of the insights and conclusions drawn from each chapter:

The initial chapter provides an introduction to the problem of the prosperity of the wicked in the book of Job. This is mainly accomplished by examining the scholarly material which has focused on the related issue of theodicy and demonstrating that commentaries, monographs, and articles on Job and ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature have generally bypassed—or only briefly treated—the brewing controversy of the first two rounds of speeches relating to the prosperity of the wicked. This lack of scholarly attention to an issue which proves to be such a point of deep frustration for Job as well as other biblical and extra-biblical writers, establishes the rationale for further investigation into this topic. This study compares relevant material from Job with other sections of the Bible and ancient Near Eastern compositions with the intent of best understanding the rhetoric, imagery, structure and theological content of Job.

It is generally conceded that the first round of speeches in the book of Job is softer in tone than the subsequent rounds, and that Job is not directly accused of wrongdoing until Zophar’s initial speech (ch. 11). Therefore, the second chapter of this study surveys selected passages from
first round of speeches, which predominantly make use of metaphors and symbolism to allude to the fate of the wicked. After Eliphaz and Bildad use familiar biblical and extra-biblical imagery to introduce the doctrine of just retribution with the intent of encouraging Job to be patient and trust in God’s assured justice that will eventually restore him (chs. 4, 8), Job lashes out against God’s arbitrary system of (in)justice (ch. 9). According to Job, God is a perverter of justice who acts on whims and does not maintain any consistent form of retribution. This irreverent response, as well as Job’s overt rejection of traditional wisdom—and with it, the application of just retribution theology to his circumstances—provokes Zophar’s accusation of Job necessarily having sinned.

Zophar’s accusation of Job foreshadows a prevalent theme in the second round of dialogue in which all of Job’s friends dedicate extensive portions of their speeches to the topic of the fate of the wicked, and suggest that the consequences of wickedness apply to Job. Because of the quantity of the material presented by Job’s companions concerning this topic, chapters 3-5 of this work closely examine the rhetoric and imagery used by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, respectively. This analysis of the friends’ rhetoric and imagery proves to be invaluable in understanding Job’s rebuttal of their dogma in chapter 21.

Eliphaz’s defense of traditional wisdom, and of the doctrine of just retribution that indicates a dreadful end to the wicked (15:17-35), is examined in chapter 3. Eliphaz commences his speech by focusing on the deranged mental condition of the wicked and the consequent terror they experience. The wicked also experience poverty, according to Eliphaz, who uses the image of a once prosperous overindulgent man to portray the affluence of the wicked—likely gained through dishonest means—as an illusion. Eliphaz employs botanic imagery as well as the symbol of darkness to ultimately proclaim that the wicked live a fruitless life and are destined for a horrifying death.
Chapter 4 analyzes Bildad’s second speech (18:5-21), in which he also uses vivid imagery and rhetoric to depict the tragic fate of the wicked. Bildad makes use of the widely-known light/darkness dichotomy to portray the quality of human life and concludes that the life of the wicked is deprived of light, suggesting that the wicked are essentially dead. Bildad then presents the life path of the wicked as one that is laden with traps that eventually cause the wicked to stumble. The reason that the impious stumble in their way is clear to Bildad: they trust in their own wisdom and not in God’s. Ultimately Bildad, like Eliphaz, focuses upon the death penalty for wickedness. In a section noticeably characterized by imagery shared with other ancient Near Eastern cultures, Bildad describes the wicked succumbing to “The Firstborn of Death,” and the “King of Terrors.” Not only do the wicked suffer, according to Bildad, but their progeny are also eliminated, leaving them with no lineage to carry on their names. God is completely responsible for this punishing of the wicked, which serves as a public illustration of the doctrine of just retribution in action.

Zophar’s second speech (ch. 20), which extensively focuses on the wicked’s acquisition, possession, and forfeiture of ill-gotten gain, is examined in chapter 5. Zophar argues that the wicked attain illicit possessions by exploitation of the weak/poor and uses imagery of swallowing to portray the impious as striving to maintain their possessions. Nevertheless, Zophar emphasizes the ephemerality of ill-gotten gain by depicting God causing the wicked to return their possessions through vomiting. The imagery related to swallowing and vomiting illicit possessions is conspicuously similar to that used in other ancient Near Eastern compositions—namely, the Instructions of Amenemope—to make the same point concerning the inability of the wicked to remain wealthy. Zophar ultimately concludes that, not only is the wealth of the wicked ephemeral, but the life of the wicked is also unsustainable. The wicked perpetually fear inevitable retribution,
which comes in the form of God shooting the wicked through with an arrow and destroying their houses.

Up until chapter 21 Job primarily addresses his complaint to God, despite his friends’ accusations of wickedness throughout their second round of speeches. Nevertheless, at the end of the second round of dialogue, Job provides a conclusive rejoinder to his friends’ allegations of wickedness. Job’s rebuttal is the topic of chapter 6 of this work, in which I point out that Job specifically counters five recurring arguments of his friends’ speeches based upon human experience as opposed to traditional wisdom.

Initially, Job opposes the symbolism of light and darkness as it is used by his friends to suggest that the wicked live deplorable lives. According to Job, the lamp of the wicked rarely wanes, which is evident in the wicked growing strong and thriving. Secondly, Job argues against the assertion that the wicked’s wrongdoing affects those around them and their ability to have children. Job contends that the offspring of the wicked are not only abundant, but also extremely happy and free from the effects of their parents’ sins. Thirdly, Job denies the idea that the wicked are eventually dispossessed of all of their wealth. The wicked are, in fact, blessed with abundant prosperity which is evident through their possession of fertile livestock. Fourthly, Job refutes the idea that there is any distinction in the type of death one dies based upon one’s actions in life. All meet the same fate in death according to Job. Lastly, Job rejects the oft-mentioned retribution upon the abode (i.e., house, tent, dwelling place, etc.) of the wicked. Job claims that anyone who has travelled outside of his friends’ community would attest to the wicked being spared the day of calamity, and even honored in their death. Job’s refutation of his friends’ doctrine of just retribution is comprehensive and references his companions’ specific rhetoric, imagery, and theological points in order to demonstrate that their dogmas are not applicable in Job’s situation.
Chapter 7 of this dissertation provides a summary of the five primary recurring themes that relate to the doctrine of just retribution throughout the first two rounds of dialogues: 1) the companions’ consistent appeal to traditional wisdom, 2) the temporality of wealth and impending poverty for the wicked, 3) the absence of offspring and infertility of the impious, 4) the terrorization of the wicked through perpetual fear, 5) the ephemerality of the existence of the wicked and their public demise. This summary is followed by a section that tracks and summarizes three of the main points of imagery that appear in discussions on the fate of the wicked in Job, the Bible, and, where available, in ancient Near Eastern compositions. This imagery consists of: 1) the dichotomy between light and darkness, 2) botanic and agricultural imagery, 3) imagery of swallowing and vomiting. In this section, I not only track and summarize the themes and the usage of specific imagery, but I discuss how they are significant factors in tracking the evolving discussion over the fate of the wicked through the first two rounds of dialogue in Job.
1 Introduction, Survey and Goals

1.1 Introduction to the Prosperity of the Wicked as a Theme

The prosperity of the wicked is a sign of divine injustice. That is what the prophet Jeremiah suggests when he states “You would be in the right, O LORD, if I were to make a claim against you. Yet I will present charges against you: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are the workers of treachery at ease?” (Jer 12:1)¹ The dilemma that the prophet Jeremiah presents is that God does not grant success according to principles of justice. This curiosity regarding the fate of the wicked is an issue that ranges nearly the extent of the Hebrew Bible and is recorded as a problematic issue reaching back as far as the times of the patriarchs. In Gen 18:23-33 Abraham repeatedly questions God, insisting to know if the judge of the earth would treat the righteous and the wicked alike. Surely, Abraham suggests, if there are just a few righteous scattered among the wicked, God will not indiscriminately execute judgment.

The inquiries of Jeremiah and Abraham are related in that they both pertain to the justice of God. In Abraham’s view, a just God would necessarily save the righteous from affliction. Jeremiah, on the other hand, challenges God’s justice from the opposite perspective. Coming from a situation of great hardship, Jeremiah questions God concerning the reason that the wicked receive the blessings that tradition indicates should benefit the righteous. Jeremiah and Abraham are both concerned with the fates of the righteous and the wicked in light of what they expect from a just God. In other words, Jeremiah’s and Abraham’s questions regarding human fate are inextricably linked with the question of theodicy.

The book of Job has been long considered the biblical text that is most relevant to the question of theodicy. In fact, as Edward Greenstein summarizes, “conventional biblical

¹ All biblical references are my translations unless otherwise noted.
scholarship suggests that the primary theme of the book concerns theodicy, the problem of unjust or inexplicable suffering.”2 That is to say, an abundance of studies of the book of Job approach it like Abraham, asking if a just God could permit the righteous to suffer. Thus, studies considering the issue of theodicy in the book of Job abound, and the theological explanations for the problem of innocent suffering continue to multiply.

Nevertheless, there is a significant theodicy-related theme that remains by and large unexplored. Since many of the studies relating to Job have addressed the issue of theodicy by asking the exasperating question, “Why do the righteous suffer?”, few have paid close attention to the way the rhetoric and imagery of the book relate to Job’s contention that the wicked, in fact, prosper—which is a mutual dilemma for both Job and Jeremiah. Job’s assertion, brought to its apex in chapter 21, is not at all unexpected in light of his companions’ continuous pronouncements of the dreadful fate of the wicked, which they base upon traditional wisdom. The prosperity of the

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Nevertheless, E. W. Nicholson calls into question the common focus on theodicy in the book of Job noting that Job twice reaffirms his fidelity to God in the prologue (1:21 and 2:10) but never exculpates God for his suffering. Through this, Job “declares that his evil is no less from God than was the good that was hitherto in life…” This fact, according to Nicholson, apparently attenuates the theodicy motif in Job because “by definition a theodicy seeks to acquit God of the evil that befalls his servants.” At the same time, however, the lack of apparent need for theodicy raises the topic of theodicy which God is responsible for answering in the whirlwind speeches. E. W. Nicholson, "The Limits of Theodicy as a Theme of the Book of Job," in Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton (eds. Day, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72. Differently, Tremper Longman III argues that Job’s suffering—which is commonly understood to be the basis of the question of theodicy—is in fact an occasion for discussing the true message of the book, which is wisdom. Tremper Longman III, Job (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 66, 462.

wicked is a major theological dilemma for Job, and consequently a significant theological theme, which is ever so conspicuous in the first two rounds of speeches.

Not only did the ancient Israelites struggle with questions regarding the fate of the wicked and the justice of God, but modern scholarship has unearthed a plethora of extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern literature that likewise considers the issue of theodicy. This literature spans from Egypt to Mesopotamia and beyond and is pervaded by fascinating theological, imagistic, and linguistic features which have proven invaluable for biblical studies. This is particularly for research related to biblical wisdom literature, which has benefitted from the discovery of multiple ancient Near Eastern documents that resemble this genre in rhetoric, imagery, and even theology.

Despite the well-conceded fact that the literature of the ancient Near East has never yielded another “Job” in content and/or character, it is nevertheless imperative to study Job alongside these compositions and consider how they inform reading the sections of Job which focus on the shared theological quandary regarding the prosperity of the wicked. Accordingly, the present study poses the following questions: How do Job and his companions depict the fate of the wicked within their respective paradigms of justice, and what can be learned through reading their claims in conjunction with extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern compositions that deal with comparable issues? The initial point of departure in exploring this topic is to review how modern scholarship has addressed these questions along with related topics.

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5 For essays on a wide range of ancient Near Eastern languages and literatures that relate to the issue of theodicy see, Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor eds, *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

6 Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 14; London: Inter-Varsity, 1976), 25, 31. With regard to the originality of Job, Ball colorfully states, “We might as well expect to find Shakespeare as we know him in the pages of Holinshed or Plutarch, or in the plays of Plautus and Seneca, or in the dramas and romances of his Italian contemporaries, as to find the direct source of this extraordinary product of Israel’s genius in Babylonian or any other older literature.” C. J. Ball, *The Book of Job: A Revised Text and Version* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 8. See also Rowley, *Job*, 5-6.
1.2 A Select Review of Contemporary Literature

Interest in the Bible in its ancient Near Eastern literary setting is a relatively new phenomenon. This is particularly evident when considering the limitations of scholars because of a lack of proficiency in ancient Near Eastern languages for the better part of the entire contemporary era. This, of course, has changed in the past century and a half as there have been significant strides facilitating the deciphering of ancient Near Eastern documents that have been unearthed during this time period. For example, the finding of the Rosetta Stone in 1799, which was inscribed in hieroglyphic, demotic, and Greek, facilitated the decryption of the Egyptian language by Jean François Champollion, and opened biblical research up to a previously unexplored world of Egyptian literature. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the trilingual (Elamite, Old Persian, and Akkadian) Behistun Inscription of Darius was found which brought Akkadian to light making some of the earliest writing of the complex civilizations that previously inhabited Mesopotamia available to biblical researchers. These and other comparable discoveries, which have shed light on the languages, literature, and peoples of the ancient Near East, have permitted biblical scholars to see more deeply into the world of the Bible, thereby compelling an examination of these compositions alongside of the Bible.

Since the emergence of comparative biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, wisdom literature has become a prime interest. Job in particular has attracted much attention because of

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8 It is not the purpose of this work to argue at length for the existence of a wisdom literature genre in the Bible and the ancient Near East. This work assumes that wisdom as a genre is evident in the Bible, and satisfactorily defended as it pertains to ancient Near Eastern literature. Regarding wisdom literature in the ancient Near East, Sara Denning-Bolle argues that “just because there does not exist a specific literary genre of wisdom literature in Mesopotamia…does not mean that the concept was absent.” Sara J. Denning-Bolle, "Wisdom and Dialogue in the Ancient Near East," Numen 34 (1987): 216. Denning-Bolle goes on to assert that, “wisdom itself is a supra-cultural and trans-cultural phenomenon” which is demonstrated by the fact that “words for wisdom [in various languages]…are all either etymologically or semantically alike, or both” (p. 219). Denning-Bolle concedes that defining wisdom in Mesopotamia has been a difficult task, but contends that dialogue was the primary means through which wisdom was communicated in Mesopotamia which is why the “Babylonian Theodicy” and the “Dialogue of Pessimism” are
the conspicuous “righteous sufferer” theme, among additional characteristics, shared with other ancient Near Eastern compositions. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the righteous sufferer motif is, perhaps, one of the primary reasons that few commentators have compared the rhetoric and imagery of ancient Near Eastern compositions to Job in relation to the fate of the wicked. The tendency to view the book of Job in order to grapple with the theological question of innocent suffering has seemingly determined the method in which many scholars have investigated comparable literature from the ancient Near East.

1.2.1 Commentaries on Job

This inclination towards resolving the problem of theodicy in Job is precisely what is evident in the early critical commentaries written during and after the discovery of the ancient Near Eastern materials. For example, Franz Delitzsch considered the book of Job to essentially treat the question of why afflictions fall upon the righteous. Delitzsch answers this question by appealing to Deut. 8:16, which indicates that suffering can stem from God’s love, and consequently asserts that, “there is a suffering of the righteous which is not a decree of wrath…but a dispensation of that love itself. In fact, this truth is at the heart of the book of Job.” Delitzsch disagrees that the book of Job is about destroying the “old Mosaic doctrine of retribution” calling the doctrine a “modern phantom” considered masterpieces of discourse in Akkadian literature. Denning-Bolle thereby claims that Mesopotamian texts which revolve around dialogue offer unique insight into the role of the wisdom tradition (pp. 225-28). For the recent debate over whether there was a distinctive wisdom literature in the ancient Near East and the Bible see Mark R. Sneed ed., Was there a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2015).

9 See Rowley, Job, 6-8. Edwin Good has his doubts concerning how helpful the ancient Near Eastern material can be with regard to dealing with the issue of suffering. Good states, “I cannot point to a single Mesopotamian, Canaanite, or Egyptian work that has clearly influenced the ways in which the Book of Job handles or closes upon suffering. It remains to be seen, indeed, whether undeserved suffering is the (or a) central issue in Job.” Edwin M. Good, In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job, With a Translation (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 9.

10 Delitzsch, Job, 1:1.

11 Ibid., 1:2. This appears to be precisely what Eliphaz contends in 5:17-18.
and claiming that “the distinction between the suffering of the righteous and the retributive justice of God, brought about in the book of Job, is nothing new.”

Delitzsch additionally notes that Job and other biblical wisdom books are seemingly “stripped of everything peculiarly Israelitish,” and suggests more specifically, that the author of Job was not an Israelite. These assertions early in the period of modern critical biblical studies, hint at the idea that there may have been shared ideas between Job and other wisdom-oriented compositions of the ancient Near East. This inclination to examine non-Israelite elements in the book of Job persisted in scholarship and is noted in S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray’s commentary on Job. Unlike Delitzsch, however, Driver and Gray were privy to the discoveries of the late 19th and early 20th centuries which is when Ludlul bel nêmeqi was discovered, translated, and in its initial stages of interpretation. Driver and Gray’s awareness of this Babylonian composition led them to expand upon the non-Israelite elements suggested by Delitzsch and consider Job as part of the literary world of the ancient Near East. This outlook led to Driver and Gray offering an early translation of portions of Ludlul, comparing them with Job, and pointing out particular aspects of the respective compositions which resembled one another. With regard to the similarities they state:

Among the points of resemblance between this poem and Job are the poetical form, the subject, viz. the sudden reduction of a man of great position, who had already lived a long and prosperous life, to great misery of mind, body and estate, the long description of his sufferings put into the mouth of the sufferer, the contrast between

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12 Delitzsch provides two reasons answering the question of why afflictions fall upon the righteous: 1) God, in love, disciplines and purifies people through affliction for their own advancement, and 2) A loving God proves and tests people through afflictions so that this person might be able to manifest their righteousness despite the suffering. Ibid., 1:2-4.
13 Ibid., 1:5.
14 Delitzsch suggests that the author was careful to relate the patriarchal story of the non-Israelite Job, which was passed down among trans-Jordanian Arab tribes into the Israelite context. This is especially evident through the author’s usage of the divine name almost exclusively throughout the prologue and epilogue. Ibid., 1:6. This opinion of the author being a non-Israelite was later reiterated by Robert Pfeiffer, who called the author of Job an “Edomite sage.” Robert H. Pfeiffer, The Books of the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 185.
15 Henceforth referred to as Ludlul.
these sufferings and the kind of life to which his long-maintained piety might have been expected to lead, the reflections on the mysteries of God's dealings with mortals.\(^\text{16}\)

Though they were not the first to notice the similarities between Job and extra-biblical literature,\(^\text{17}\) Driver and Gray were foremost in a generation of critical commentators whose academic work on Job could no longer be considered thorough without mention of the comparable ancient Near Eastern materials. Also noteworthy among this group was C. J. Ball, who in 1922 devoted a significant amount of space to \textit{Ludlul} in the introduction to his commentary on Job.\(^\text{18}\) Ball presented a select translation of sections of \textit{Ludlul} that had been discovered, comparing and contrasting aspects of this composition with Job. One of the most important observations relevant to the present study is Ball’s remark that a shared feature between the compositions is the theme relating to the universality of human fate. Concerning the sufferer’s complaints in \textit{Ludlul}, Ball states, “although his life had been thus blameless, he has to complain (like Job) that Heaven has treated him as if he were a heinous evildoer. Good rulers and bad fare alike.”\(^\text{19}\) The significance that Ball places on the finding of not only \textit{Ludlul} but other ancient Near Eastern literature is evident in the extensive usage of Akkadian among other Semitic languages throughout his advanced philological discussions within his commentary.

Édouard Dhorme was likewise at the forefront of using philology in research on the book of Job. This is unmistakable in his 1926 commentary\(^\text{20}\) in which Dhorme was thoroughly

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\(^{16}\) S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job together with a New Translation} (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), xxxiii. Driver and Gray are just as direct on this very same page in pointing out the differences between the two compositions and ultimately conclude, “(a)t present, at all events, it cannot be said that any Babylonian source of the book of Job has been made out.”

\(^{17}\) See for example Morris Jastrow Jr., "A Babylonian Parallel to the Story of Job," \textit{JBL} 25 (1906): 135-91. In this article, Jastrow contends that \textit{Ludlul} was written to discuss the same problem that confronts the reader of Job—“to wit, the cause of the ills that human flesh is heir to” (p. 140).

\(^{18}\) See Ball, \textit{Job}, 12-30 for translation and discussion of difficult words and phrases.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 11.

conversant with the material of the ancient Near East in his discussion of philologically challenging words and phrases. It is precisely because of Dhorme’s proficiency in ancient Near Eastern languages that it is surprising he did not incorporate a section directly addressing the ancient Near Eastern compositions that had been found in relation to Job in his commentary.  

Likewise, N. H. Tur-Sinai was masterful and extremely clever working with a wide range of ancient Near Eastern and languages. This is a reality particularly evident in the section of his commentary dedicated to the purported original text and translation of the book of Job—which he strived to demonstrate was from an Aramaic prototype. Though it is apparent that Tur-Sinai’s emphasis was not positioning Job in its ancient Near Eastern literary context, Tur-Sinai dedicates surprisingly little space to comparative studies between Job and ancient Near Eastern material—let alone compare the compositions’ depictions of the fate of the wicked. Nevertheless, both Dhorme and Tur-Sinai demonstrated through their attention to ancient Near Eastern materials for philological purposes, that an awareness of the literature of the world of the Bible had become indispensable in order to competently translate and interpret Job.

Nevertheless, commentaries over the last generation of critical scholarship generally used the ancient Near Eastern materials for more than philology. As translations of the ancient Near Eastern compositions improved, and interpretations became more nuanced, scholars became better able to compare the theology of these texts with biblical texts, and in particular, with Job. This is, for the most part, the approach of H. H. Rowley, who notes that the Israelites, like many other people groups, were troubled and perplexed by the problem of righteous suffering. Rowley

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21 Francis Andersen seems somewhat confounded by this which is evident through his comments on this topic in the preface of Dhorme, Job, iii. Dhorme’s discussion of potential “foreign influences” upon the book of Job in his introduction only mentions *Ludlit* and suggests that this composition better resembles many psalms than it does Job. He concludes this section by stating that many of the similarities between Job and *Ludlit* may have arisen “merely from the fact that the problem of evil was present also in the mind of the Mesopotamian poet. Nowhere is there to be noted a direct influence on the Book of Job” (p. cxi).

observes the apparent thematic affinity that Job shares with some Egyptian, Akkadian, and Sumerian literature, but predictably revisits the points of similarity and distinction between Job and *Ludlul*—which by this point had seemingly become the point of departure for comparative studies with Job. The focus of Rowley’s brief comparison is presumably to highlight the differences between these compositions as opposed to emphasizing the similarities, which he claims to be quite “superficial.” Nevertheless, Rowley demonstrates the theological inclination of many interpreters of Job in light of comparable ancient Near Eastern literature in noting that the major difference is that “Job never allows that his phenomenal sufferings can have been brought about by his sin.” As significant and accurate as this observation may be, it is also a clear indication of the perpetual emphasis upon the righteous sufferer motif without exploring the injustice perceived by the sufferer upon considering the prosperity of the wicked.

Like Rowley, Marvin Pope concedes that the problem with which Job is concerned also confounded the sages of the ancient Near East. Unlike Rowley, however, Pope provides extensive quotations of Egyptian, Sumerian, and Akkadian literature to demonstrate the necessity of broadly grasping the background and environment of the entire ancient Near East in order to properly interpret Job. Pope’s approach to the ancient Near Eastern material is thus well-rounded and draws from these materials for philological, theological, and literary purposes. While noting that several Mesopotamian compositions treat the theological problem of suffering, Pope is keen to point out that there are also materials that exhibit literary resemblances to the book of Job. For example, Pope observes that “in literary form the Egyptian Dispute over Suicide bears some

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24 Ibid., 7.
similarity to Job in that it begins and ends with prose sections, the middle being poetic soliloquy
by the wretched man.”

In addition to this, Pope notes that the Sumerian “Man and his God”—which he considers to be the forerunner of comparable subsequent Akkadian materials—presupposes the doctrine of just retribution. Concerning the Mesopotamian notion of just retribution in relation to Job, Pope states:

When evil befalls a man, there is no recourse but to admit one’s guilt and praise one’s god and plead for mercy…The attitude of Job’s comforters in the Dialogue is essentially the same as that presupposed in the Sumerian composition [“Man and His God”]: that the victim must have sinned and has no hope but to confess and plead for forgiveness and restoration.

This sensitivity to literary form and theology between Job and ancient Near Eastern literature, as well as an emphasis upon philology in the commentary, resulted in an analysis sensitive to idiosyncratic aspects of Job in relation to extra-biblical compositions. Accordingly, Pope recognizes that “(t)he worldly success of the wicked in contrast to the sufferings of the righteous was, and is, a vexatious problem to the thinking and feeling man and is a major concern of the biblical wisdom literature.”

Though not extending his commentary regarding the prosperity of the wicked beyond the vexation experienced by the biblical writers, Pope’s observation is, nevertheless, significant in presenting the necessity and validity of further investigating this motif.

Juxtaposing Job and literature from the ancient Near East is not always as multifaceted as Pope’s approach. In fact, Francis Andersen hardly dedicates space to philological comparisons in his commentary, but rather, focuses on the literary background of Job derived from the ancient

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26 Pope makes similar observations concerning the “Tale of the Eloquent Peasant,” noting that the “text is introduced by a prose prologue and epilogue and the central portion of the text is composed of nine semi-poetic appeals for justice on the part of the eloquent peasant.” Ibid., lvii-lviii.
27 Ibid., lx.
28 Ibid., 151.
Near East, and suggests that the influence of ancient parallel compositions might be traced through content, plot, and form. Andersen says little about similar content between Job and ancient Near Eastern material, but importantly recognizes the parallels with didactic Egyptian instruction literature—namely, “The Sayings of Amenemope.” As far as plot is concerned, Andersen notes the superficial similarities between Job and the Ugaritic story of King Kirta who, as a respectable king is bereaved of his family, yet whose fortunes ultimately turn after ritual prayers. Andersen then gives attention to Ludlul, yet interestingly suggests that the resemblance between the book of Job and Ludlul is exclusively one of genre—a genre which recounts the poet’s sufferings. The Sumerian “Man and His God,” however, shares Job’s sense of the burden of sin as well as the antiquity of the theory that a “guilty man’s only hope is to move God to compassion.”

Andersen’s comparisons are more extensive when relating similarities of the form of Job to ancient Near Eastern literature—especially pertaining to dialogue. For instance, Andersen states that the literary form of debate in the ancient Near East was intended to impress the audience through the participants’ rhetoric, and was a method through which the ancients discussed issues akin to the problem of divine injustice in light of suffering. The “Babylonian Theodicy,” is one of these compositions, which Andersen asserts is “highly artificial in nature” like Job, in which the sufferer dialogues with one or more friends in alternating stanzas. This manner of debate

29 Andersen, Job, 32.
30 Ibid., 24-26. Interestingly, Andersen opines that the only story that is similar in plot to Job is the Indian legend Hariś-Candra—one in which any direct or historical connection to Job is highly improbable. See p. 25 for a summary.
31 Andersen’s commentary on Job and ancient Near Eastern documents is generally inclined to pointing out that, despite the fact that Job bears the marks of an ancient Near Eastern composition, it is significantly different than the non-biblical literature of the ancient Near East. For example, some of the observations that Andersen makes concerning Ludlul are that it is a hymn of thanksgiving recounting the plight and telling of the poet’s sufferings, yet Job is more of a lamentation and less of a song of gratitude. According to Andersen, Ludlul is “only a monologue and lacks the elaborate dramatic form of Job.” Also, the Babylonian polytheism presupposed by Ludlul could not properly treat the questions raised by Job. Lastly, while the “(g)ratitude to the gods for the return of good health is a universal theme” in Ludlul, the book of Job never mentions a cure for Job’s ailments except the fact that God restored his fortunes (42:10). Ibid., 27-28.
32 Ibid., 28.
transcended Mesopotamia to Egypt as is evident in the “Dispute over Suicide” and “The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant,” which are both compositions that exhibit the prose-poetry-prose pattern, for the epilogue, dialogue, and prologue sections—similar to Job. These similarities do not, of course, demonstrate any direct influence upon Job, but Andersen makes the astute observation of the common usage of this literary A-B-A pattern across ancient Near Eastern cultures.

Literary presentation of the book of Job is also the primary focus of Edwin Good, who states that the most significant purpose of commentating on Job is “to investigate how the Book of Job goes about happening as a book, as a work of literary art.” As a result of this goal, many of the common questions with regard to locating Job historically are not of great importance to Good. This is noted in Good’s unambiguous comments regarding an analysis of speculative background information. Good states that the “meaning in a literary work is in the work’s text, and knowledge about its author’s life and even the author’s stated intentions about the book offer no unambiguous assistance in interpretation.” Therefore, as opposed to embarking upon a quest to discover what content of Job may have been borrowed from ancient Near Eastern compositions, Good concentrates on the similarities in the modes of literary presentation between Job and other ancient Near Eastern works. Good observes, along with Andersen, that Job uses a formal dialogue in order to present the content of the composition and indicates that other works in the ancient

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33 Andersen mentions “A Pessimistic Dialogue between Master and Servant” as a composition that makes use of dialogue but states that “its lack of moral earnestness keeps it apart from Job” and that the “effete and languid master knows nothing of Job’s agony. There is no real debate, since the slave merely echoes (mockingly?) his master’s sentiments.” Ibid., 32.
34 Ibid., 29-31. Andersen also notes that the Code of Hammurabi consists of laws also framed by a poetic introduction and conclusion. In Andersen’s view, the mixture of poetry and prose in an A-B-A design cannot be used as evidence for composite authorship.
36 Ibid., 2.
Near East—namely, the “Babylonian Theodicy,” “The Dialogue of Pessimism,” and the Egyptian “Dialogue of a Man and his Ba,” also used poetry as the method of literary presentation.  

Norman Habel takes an integrative approach in incorporating ancient Near Eastern materials into his commentary by establishing connections between Job and the ancient Near Eastern thought world in applicable sections. This appeal to the ancient Near Eastern materials is performed after having first sought to interpret the passages from Job in the context of the book and other biblical wisdom literature. This approach leads to several keen observations by Habel to related imagery between Job in its biblical context and ancient Near Eastern materials. The example most relevant to this study relates to Habel’s observation that Job’s companions used imagery common in the ancient Near East in lengthy portrayals of the wicked, eventually implying that he was indeed to be counted among them. More specifically, Habel discusses the shared illustration of the lion between Job and the “Babylonian Theodicy” to reinforce Eliphaz’s retribution theology. This shared imagery between Job and a similar composition from the ancient Near East could have provided the ancient Israelite audience, who were familiar with this material, a context in which to understand the book of Job.

Nevertheless, there are commentators who believe that similarities between Job and other ancient Near Eastern literature—especially wisdom compositions—demonstrates more than just a shared thought world, but rather, that the author of Job may have been influenced by the ancient Near Eastern literary tradition. This is where John Hartley stands on the issue, suggesting that the author of Job may have incorporated elements from the ancient Near East in determining the shape

39 Ibid., 57.
of Job, as opposed to borrowing the substance of these compositions. Nonetheless, Hartley notes the general concern for disorder and human suffering through the ancient Near East which drove these various cultures to compose literature similar to Job “sometimes in structure and other times in thematic development.”

With regard to structure, Hartley, like Andersen, notices that the long speeches of an offended person that are evident in the “Protests of the Eloquent Peasant” are similar in form, and in a mutual search for justice, to Job’s speeches. Concerning thematic development Hartley notes that the weary protagonist in “A Dispute over Suicide” petitions the gods to defend him, similarly to Job, and ultimately considers death to be an escape from the current distress.

Hartley eventually shifts focus from Egyptian compositions to Mesopotamian literature, which treats the common issue of suffering, for potential influence. Recognizing that the Babylonian *Ludlul* is the most famous parallel to Job, Hartley compares, but mostly contrasts, a series of compositions originating in Mesopotamia. Hartley ultimately concludes that comparative work between Job and ancient Near Eastern materials essentially highlights Job’s uniqueness despite any potential ancient Near Eastern influence upon the author. Perhaps it is because of Hartley’s supposition that the ancient Near Eastern materials influenced the author of Job “more in format than in substance” that there is hardly any acknowledgement of the prosperity of the wicked as a theme in the review of the ancient Near Eastern compositions.

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40 Hartley does, however, mention the similarity in subject matter with the “Instructions of Amenemope” as a parallel to Proverbs and states; “(i)n places the verbal identity indicates that one of these texts, more than likely the ‘Instruction of Amenemope,’ directly influences the other.” This statement foreshadows Hartley’s approach to the potential relationship of the ancient Near Eastern material and Job. John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 6-7.

41 Ibid., 7.


43 Ibid., 7-8.

44 Namely, “Man and His God,” “I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom,” “A Dialogue about Human Misery,” an unnamed Akkadian text dating to the 16th century B.C.E., and an Akkadian text about a sufferer which was found at Ugarit.


46 Ibid., 11.
The suggestion that the author of Job may have been directly influenced by ancient Near Eastern compositions continues to draw interest, even in the most contemporary works on Job. For instance, in his recent commentary, Tremper Longman III argues that the “Babylonian Theodicy” maintains the closest relationship of the ancient Near Eastern materials to Job because of the shared components of a dialogue between a sufferer and a companion regarding the problem of unjust suffering. Longman implies that the author of Job may have been inspired by this particular composition to craft Job in the form of a dialogue with the intent of pitting competing viewpoints against one another. Job, however, differs from the Babylonian text in that the divine voice ends the debate by providing a definitive viewpoint on the issues at hand, thereby resolving the conflict.  

C.-L. Seow, on the other hand, casts doubt on the idea that the dialogues of Job were modelled after this Babylonian counterpart—though he does not unequivocally reject the possibility. Seow’s apprehension comes from observations in the difference in genre and tropes, tone and the quantity of friends—among other factors—between the two compositions. Additionally, Seow makes the important observation that texts like the “Babylonian Theodicy,” which apparently treat the issue of unjust suffering, actually “assume that human beings are inevitably sinful and bring suffering upon themselves.” Seow asserts that the most persistent feature in the comparable “righteous sufferer literature” is the absence of an identifiable reason for suffering.

Another related issue that continues to reappear in comparative studies between Job and the ancient Near Eastern materials is the question of their mutual appeal to the doctrine of just retribution and how it relates to the purpose of writing Job. A century after Delitzsch claimed that

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49 Ibid., 51.
50 Ibid.
the primary purpose of Job was not about undermining the doctrine of just retribution, David Clines asserts that Job, properly viewed in the context of other biblical wisdom literature and Deuteronomy, “is an assault on the general validity of the doctrine of retribution.”51 Thus, it appears that Clines’ handling of the ancient Near Eastern materials is carried out from this perspective. In a very short section relating Job to Ancient Near Eastern literature, Clines mentions the most prominent Near Eastern texts related to Job in Ugaritic, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Sumerian,52 noting that there are shared rhetoric and motifs related to suffering, injustice, and death across the ancient world.53 James Crenshaw, on the other hand, engages with the very same texts, but takes a stimulating interpretive turn. Crenshaw argues that Job’s friends have due warrant for their arguments by locating the companions’ theology in its ancient Near Eastern setting and contending that, “(t)he friends argued from universally accepted beliefs about the brief duration of a wicked person’s prosperity.”54 Nevertheless in the biblical texts, empirical observation of the prosperity of the wicked calls into question the idealistic view of God’s justice.

Crenshaw’s reading of Job is particularly sensitive to inner-biblical allusions, especially to Jeremiah, and points out the common struggle of reconciling the prosperity of the wicked with God’s apparently inequitable ways. For example, Psalm 73 commences with the psalmist recognizing the goodness of God but confessing that experience does not always uphold this belief. This tension is culminated when the psalmist mentions that the prosperity of the wicked is a stumbling block, until the psalmist is able to see their dreadful end. Commenting on Jeremiah’s confessions, Crenshaw states, “(h)ere the prophet complains that sinners prosper while he suffers

51 David J. A. Clines, Job 1-20 (WBC 17; Dallas: Word 1989), lxii.
53 Clines, Job 1-20, lix-lx.
54 Crenshaw, Reading Job, 20.
from false accusations, but more important, Jeremiah accuses Yahweh of seduction and rape. In Jeremiah’s eyes, the deity had betrayed loyalty, repaying it with contempt.” To Jeremiah, just like to Job, God had become a personal adversary, treating a righteous person like a sinner while conferring prosperity on the wicked. Crenshaw’s observations, which tie the ancient Near Eastern thought world to the problem of the prosperity of the wicked expressed by biblical characters, is not only a keen observation, but it is also paramount for the current study.

The modern critical period of biblical studies does not lack for commentary on the book of Job which to some degree focuses on Job in its ancient Near Eastern linguistic and literary settings. Much of this commentary approaches the topic of theodicy in Job and the ancient Near East quite broadly, providing general comparisons. The prevalent observations of resemblances between the compositions on the issue of theodicy—which were formerly groundbreaking upon the discovery of parallel ancient Near Eastern materials—have evolved into traditional recurring explanations of the similarities among these compositions.

Nevertheless, there is still much to be learned through comparative work with regard to imagery, rhetoric, comparative philology, and literary features. Therefore, the popular observations should be viewed as the staging ground for further comparative investigations. For example, almost all commentators expressly state the significance of locating Job in its ancient Near Eastern linguistic context for philological purposes, suggesting the ongoing necessity of considering these texts in conjunction with one another on lexical and rhetorical grounds. Additionally, more than a few commentators have located Job within the ancient Near Eastern wisdom genre, while others have noted the shared literary features of dialogue and poetry as methods of presenting Job’s and other sufferers’ cases to either a deity or a companion. Scholars

55 Ibid., 22.
56 Ibid.
have also observed the shared traditional doctrine of just retribution between characters in the ancient Near Eastern materials and the characters of Job. Hence, it is understandable why *Ludlul* is the starting point of comparison for most commentators because of the emphasis on just retribution in the ancient Near Eastern materials and the apparent unjust suffering of Job.

These observations, recognized and developed by modern commentators, remain helpful for comparative work between Job and ancient Near Eastern materials related to the issue of theodicy. Nevertheless, the scope of the investigation among these materials has traditionally been narrow, predominantly focusing on the righteous sufferer motif. Much more can be gleaned from the ancient Near Eastern materials concerning the imagery and rhetoric of Job by expanding the range of investigation to incorporate the problem of the prosperous wicked. This comparative work could also benefit from the incorporation of ancient Near Eastern materials, the subject matter and themes of which differ from the traditional pious sufferer compositions.

1.2.2 Theodicy and the Fate of the Wicked in Literature on Job

Whereas biblical commentaries characteristically relate a given book to ancient Near Eastern materials with the intent of explaining the biblical text, monographs, book chapters, and articles benefit from topical, focused exposition. The numerous treatments regarding the issue of theodicy and the suffering of the righteous in the book of Job have established a foundation for discovering what this book might convey regarding the fate of the wicked. A topical review of select literature that treats suffering in light of divine justice in the book of Job prepares the way for an analysis relating to how Job portrays those who undeservedly prosper.

1.2.2.1 Theodicy and Perceptions of the Character of God in Job

Naturally, questions concerning God’s justice in light of the existence of righteous suffering raise doubt about the noble character of God by the victim. Karl-Johan Illman argues that Job’s view of God fluctuates between the prologue/epilogue sections and the dialogues.
Illman proposes that the Job of the prologue and epilogue “expresses the view that God has the right to do whatever he likes with creation,” while the Job of the dialogues “directs severe criticism against God precisely because God does what he pleases with creation.” According to Illman the familial well-being of the wicked also causes Job to lack confidence in the justice of God. Illman states, “to the Job of the dialogue, there is no difference between the just and evil” because “he has observed how the children of the wicked live in safety.” Thus, Illman asserts that at the conclusion of the story, the Job of the dialogues, though critical of God as a result of his experiences, ultimately withdraws his complaint from before the deity.

Contrarily, Greenstein argues against the idea that the book of Job presents a wavering view of God’s character, contending that the “insights into God and God’s ways that we discover in the prose tale are never really contradicted by anything one reads further on [in the book of Job] and may, in fact, be reinforced as we read.” This is evident in the manner in which Job approaches God. Job, as Greenstein argues, is defiant to the very end of the book, never relinquishing his innocence. Job’s defiance reveals that Job joins a tradition of biblical characters who spoke honestly with God, taking him to task. Whether what Job was saying was true or not regarding his suffering or the fate of the wicked, at least he was consistent in speaking honestly based upon his experience. Thus, according to Greenstein, the issue at hand in Job is not simply how Job views the character of God, but also the nature of the argument about God itself. It is

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid, 323.
60 Ibid. 332.
63 Ibid., 253.
64 See ibid., 249, for a differentiation between “truth” and “truthfulness.”
about how candidly someone can talk to, and even disagree with, God and God’s ways. Through Job’s truthful speech, he deals with his pain and the fortune of the wicked by straightforwardly addressing God by using vivid imagery and ingenious rhetoric.

1.2.2.2 Rhetoric and Imagery in Job and the Ancient Near East

The poetic masterpiece of Job is steeped in metaphor and imagery. Several scholars have pointed out the necessity to unpack the figurative language in Job in order to gain an understanding of what Job says about the wicked. Notably, Carol Newsom points out that the dialogues of the book of Job do not overtly describe wickedness itself but rather, “the poems invest their considerable energy on the sharply focused moment of the wicked person’s collapse, terror, and destruction.”

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the tropes in Job in order to follow the argumentation throughout the dialogues and grasp how the poet depicts the wicked. Properly understanding the imagery—especially the imagery utilized by Job’s companions in chapters 15, 18, and 20—leads to the conclusion, according to Newsom, that “all of the images in the poems are repetitive variations of a single feature, the insubstantiality of the wicked.”

It is particularly helpful to keep this point in mind upon arriving at Job’s harangue against his friend’s depictions of the destruction of the wicked and their prosperity in chapter 21.

In a similar vein, Greenstein stresses the importance of grappling with the figurative language of Job in order to comprehend what it asserts about the fate of the wicked. As an example of this, Greenstein treats Zophar’s comments in 20:15, “He (the wicked) swallows wealth, but then regurgitates it; God dispossesses him of it from his (the wicked’s) belly.”

The immediate context

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67 Ibid., 116-25.
of this verse suggests that wealth should be understood, as poisoned food is understood, to be metaphorical for ill-gotten gain. Ingesting wealth makes one sick and the wicked are forced to vomit. However, the second colon of this verse indicates that it is not actually the food that induces the regurgitation, but rather, Zophar’s claim is that God causes the vomiting as an act of just retribution.

This example clarifies the necessity of analyzing the rhetoric and imagery in Job for judicious interpretation. Even better exegetical explanations of various passages dealing with the fate of the wicked can be accomplished by looking outside of the Bible and gleaning from comparable ancient Near Eastern literature that exhibits analogous language and word pictures. Several ancient Near Eastern compositions not only display similar language to Job’s, but also deal with the prominent theological issue of retributive justice.

1.2.2.3 Retributive Justice in Job

The concept of theodicy is a theological problem only if God is assumed to be just. If God is good and just, it is then expected that God would compensate people for their righteousness and, correspondingly, punish the evildoer. Job handles the apparent injustice that befalls him by communicating his experience, reiterating his innocence, portraying the depths of his suffering, and demanding that God give him a trial. Job’s friends, contrastingly, deal with theodicy by communicating dogma—the model of just retribution. Because of this, Job grows terribly disappointed in his friends because they “fail to deal with the profound dimensions of his

69 Greenstein points out that the problem of theodicy is not actually explicitly stated in the prologue of Job, but rather, becomes the expectation of the reader. Greenstein states, “(t)he problem of innocent suffering—the problem of evil—is not raised by God, by the Satan, or by Job in the frame tale. It is raised, rather, in the mind of the reader—if the reader has had any expectations of God conducting himself according to principles of justice.” Greenstein, “Problem of Evil,” 337, quotation from p. 340.

suffering,” and constantly strive to find fault in Job that would explain his misfortune. Job’s friends indicate that “if the law of retribution is still in force, Job should be rehabilitated” if he is innocent. 

Nevertheless, the doctrine of retribution is not a valid option, as Greenstein points out: “the narrator, in the prose tale that opens the book of Job, removes the doctrine of retribution from the table as a possible cause of Job’s suffering.” Thus, the relevant discussion of the prosperity of the wicked arises in the second round of speeches because “if the wicked succeed, it attests to the failure of the conventional biblical principle of retribution; it demonstrates the same systemic failure one finds in the suffering of the innocent.” As a result of Job’s companions’ view of the active, universally-applicable doctrine of just retribution—along with Job’s necessity to hold to his integrity—he is compelled to disagree with them. This dissension leads to an impasse—the depths of which only the reader can fully perceive.

Scholarship has extensively focused on the companions’ emphasis upon just retribution and has long compared it to the theology of related ancient Near Eastern documents. However, several scholars have also remarked on the vexing problem of the prosperity of the wicked that the doctrine of just retribution eventually leads one to consider. Gerald Mattingly relates the issues of theodicy and the prosperity of the wicked to the Sumerian “Man and His God” as well as the “Babylonian Theodicy” and concludes that the Hebrew and Mesopotamian sages agreed on the sinful nature of humankind, retribution based upon one’s actions, and the necessity to appeal to a deity in order to solve the dilemma of pious suffering. Moshe Weinfeld agrees that the

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71 Greenstein, “Truth or Theodicy,” 245.
“Babylonian Theodicy” treats the problem of righteous suffering, and points out that this is accomplished in dialogical form, which are both similarities to Job. Weinfeld additionally observes that this dialogue leads to a discussion about the prosperity of the wicked and calls attention to the fact that, “(i)n both works [Job and the “Babylonian Theodicy”] the sufferer deplores the success of the evildoer and the failure of the righteous while the friend justifies God’s ways and supports the case of divine retribution.”

Thorkild Jacobsen endeavors to reconstruct the emergence of the doctrine of just retribution in Mesopotamia by relating it to a change in the theological paradigm concerning the responsibility of the gods pertaining to justice. According to Jacobsen, this change occurred at some point between the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C.E. which is when the gods shifted from an intransitive state to a transitive state. The transitive view of the gods assigned them responsibility for justice and moral order in society. The pragmatic effect of the gods becoming more transitive was that it personalized the actions of the divine and provoked the emergence of “personal religion.” Jacobsen describes personal religion as:

…a particularly recognized religious attitude in which the religious individual sees himself as standing in close personal relationship to the divine expecting help and guidance in his personal life and personal affairs, expecting divine anger and punishment if he sins, and love for him if he sincerely repents. In sum: the individual matters to God, God cares about him personally and deeply.  

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76 Moshe Weinfeld, "Job and its Mesopotamian Parallels—A Typological Analysis," in Text and Context: Old Testament Studies for F.C. Fensham (ed. W. Claassen; JSOTSup 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 222. Weinfeld dissents on the idea that the Sumerian variation of the “Job” motif (i.e., “Man and His God”) and Ludlul primary reflect affinity with Job but rather considers these two Mesopotamian compositions to share more in common with Psalmodic laments (pp. 221-22).

77 “The earlier world in which things happened more or less by themselves and the gods were ‘intransitive’ powers…yielded to a planned, purposeful universe actively administered and ruled by gods who have broadened their concerns far beyond what we call nature: to society as upholders of the legal and moral order…” Thorkild Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 90.

78 Ibid., 147.
Jacobsen then suggests that this aspect of personal religion deeply influenced Israel during the first millennium. Jacobsen states, “when we come down to the first millennium when Israel’s religious thinking took form, Mesopotamian influence and ideas are so pervasive that the attitude of personal religion may be considered to be part of the general cultural environment.” Nevertheless, personal religion led to a problem in that personal experience exposed the limitations of the paradigm. That is to say, within a personal religion, the follower would eventually believe that “love for me must sway the universe off its course to help and sustain me.” However, in due time the “dispassionate, terrifying, cosmic aspect of the divine which governed the way things really are and really happen” was disclosed. This, according to Jacobsen, is the religious consciousness from where the problem of the righteous sufferer emerged in Mesopotamia which is dealt with in two notable works—Ludlul and the “Babylonian Theodicy.” The biblical book of Job, however, presents the solution to this problem of the self-involved sufferer, according to Jacobsen. Jacobsen concludes that in the divine speeches of Job, “the imbalance is readdressed. The personal egocentric view of the sufferer—however righteous—is rejected.”

Ronald Williams offers a hypothesis concerning how this retributive principle eventually became adopted by ancient Israel’s religion. Williams acknowledges the theory that traditional religious concepts about suffering were called into question by the Mesopotamians as a result of the catastrophic domination of the Old Babylonians by the Kassites around 1675 B.C.E. In a similar vein, Williams claims that the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Israel and Judah respectively, caused such a severe breakdown in the social organization of these communities that a heightened sense of individualism resulted. This sense of individualism brought about a

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79 Ibid., 152.
80 Ibid., 161-62.
81 Ibid., 162.
82 Ibid., 163.
reapplication of the Deuteronomistic blessings and curses, which were initially intended to be
carried out upon the entire community of Israel. The Deuteronomistic rewards and punishments
could no longer be adopted by the community as a whole during the exiles, rather individuals were
blessed or cursed for their own actions. This is an idea that is initially manifested in Ezekiel 18.83

Shortly after William’s chapter initially appeared, Olegario García de la Fuente published
an article entitled “La Prosperidad del Malvado en el Libro de Job y en los Poemas Babilónicos
del «Justo Paciente»”84 in which he independently argued, like Williams, that the concept of just
retribution evolved through an increased sense of individualism which developed in exile and
forced the community to consider their personal responsibilities in relation to God. De la Fuente,
nevertheless adds to William’s argument in at least two ways. Initially, he significantly recognizes
that the individualization which transpired in exile led the displaced community to reconsider two
aspects of theodicy which frustrated ancient writers, “¿Cómo se concilia la justicia de Dios con el
sufrimiento del justo y la prosperidad del malvado?”85

In addition to this, de la Fuente suggests that the lack of clear revelation of life after death,
or Sheol, in ancient times provided no consolation to the people, as well as no indication of justice.
Therefore, Israel in exile possessed one main theological view with regard to the judgment of God.
The judgment of God was realized during the present life. On the one hand, compensation for a
good life consisted of temporary rewards, and triumph in this life was considered a sign of internal
sanctity. On the other hand, misfortune was considered an unequivocal sign of sin. Accordingly,

James L. Crenshaw; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 42-43, 48. This chapter was initially published in the Canadian
84 Olegario García de la Fuente, "La Prosperidad del Malvado en el Libro de Job y en los Poemas Babilónicos
and in the Babylonian ‘Righteous Sufferer’ Poems.” All translations from Spanish are mine.
85 “How does one reconcile the justice of God with the suffering of the righteous, as well as the prosperity of
the wicked?” Ibid., 603.
those who were rewarded in life were essentially righteous while those who suffered misfortune were wicked.

The major problem with this theological rationale emerged when observations indicated the antithesis of this postulation. De la Fuente identifies a potential solution to one side of this puzzling situation by those who hold the view of retributive justice. When bad things happened to people who appeared to be righteous, these occurrences could be attributed to secret or past sins. However, the opposite—that is, the prosperity of the wicked—is a much more challenging dilemma to resolve, and therefore, should receive appropriate attention when dealing with the doctrine of just retribution in Job and the ancient Near East. In de la Fuente’s own words, “…era mucho más difícil justificar la prosperidad del malvado. Es muy posible que antes de plantearse el problema del dolor del inocente se viese palpable el escándalo de la de la felicidad del impío. Al fin son dos aspectos de un mismo problema.”  

De la Fuente properly discerns that in order for questions of righteous suffering and the prosperity of the wicked to be adequately treated, they must be analyzed in light of one another.

Regardless of the exact reason for the emergence of the doctrine of just retribution in the ancient Near East and its appearance within the dialogues of Job, it must be noted that this issue is never directly treated in the book. The answer to theodicy and the reason for Job’s suffering are not revealed. Similarly, Job’s observations of the wicked prospering are never disproved. As noted by Albertson, retribution is not corrected, or even reevaluated—rather, it is ultimately disregarded. The issue of theodicy is redirected towards true wisdom.  

This emphasis on wisdom recalls what scholars have reiterated since the discovery of comparable materials from the ancient

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86 “…It was much more difficult to justify the prosperity of the wicked. It is possible that, before considering the problem of the innocent suffering, we consider the undeniable scandal of the happiness of the wicked. In the end, they are two aspects of the same problem.” Ibid., 604.

Near East—namely, that Job corresponds to the greater world of ancient Near Eastern wisdom compositions.

1.2.3 Job in the World of Wisdom

The sapiential tradition of the ancient Near East is noted to have made lists in order to classify certain phenomena according to their corresponding properties. John Gray argues that the classification of things in nature and society by scribes in the ancient Near East served not only to train them in cuneiform and hieroglyphic scripts, but also demonstrated a profound belief in a “divinely appointed Order in nature and society”—i.e. the Egyptian ma’at, the Sumerian me, and the Hebrewצדק andמשפט.  

Gray contends that the ancient Near Eastern sages’ deep concern for order in their societies provided the context for the “general principle of cause and effect, sin and retribution, virtue and reward, as in the conventional wisdom tradition of the Old Testament represented by Proverbs and by Job and his interlocutors.” This heavy emphasis on order, according to Gray, caused the people to perceive a great discrepancy between their ideology and the perception of unrighteous suffering, or of the wicked prospering. Hence, the emergence of just retribution, which Gray believes the author of Job treated upon deliberately adopting the characteristics of the ancient Near Eastern wisdom genre.

Gray is not alone in suggesting that the issue of just retribution was related to the ancient Near Eastern sages’ concern for order. Leo Perdue, similarly, contends that the doctrine of retribution stemmed from the sage’s perception of divine order in the universe. Furthermore, Perdue considers the literary corpus of the ancient Near East to be the primary literary context for

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90 Ibid., 255, see n. 21.
the Bible.\textsuperscript{91} These two positions are relevant in understanding Perdue’s view of how ancient Near Eastern sages perceived cosmic order and how this related to biblical wisdom literature:

Sapiential epistemology centered on the revelation of God in the orders that undergirded all life. The patterns that guide the phenomena of nature and human society pointed to relationality, consistency and repetition. Drawing on cosmic mythology, the wise believed that God through wisdom established a beneficent, life-giving order (צדק, ‘justice, righteousness, harmony’) which permeated the world, giving it coherence, regularity, harmony and beauty…through close observation, the evaluation of experience, critical reflection, and elegant crafting of language, powers of knowledge granted by God to the wise, sages conceptualized the features and dictates of cosmic and societal order in their instructions which they imparted to their students.\textsuperscript{92}

Perdue also argues that Israelite wisdom stemmed from a “common source of knowledge” because the ancient Israelite religious genres were heavily indebted to the mythic traditions of the surrounding cultures.\textsuperscript{93} Concerning this point John Walton correspondingly states, “it should be no surprise that…Israelite literature would reflect not only the specific culture of the Israelites but many aspects of the larger culture of the ancient Near East.”\textsuperscript{94} This seems to have been particularly true in connection with working through the vexing theological problem of apparent divine injustice that traversed several ancient Near Eastern civilizations.

Yair Hoffman points out that the design of the book of Job would have also been familiar in the ancient Near Eastern literary world. As Hoffman puts it, “(n)o matter how creative he was,

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 150. With regard to the occurrence of anomalous incidents running contrary to the sages’ ideology, Perdue states, “of course the sages recognized limits to their knowledge and readily affirmed the mystery and freedom of God which allowed divine action to transcend all patterns of consistency and sameness. And the elements of creation, including human beings, did not always act consistently and in an orderly way. Divine participation in history, human evil, and inexplicable actions of nature were not always consistent with expectations derived from observable patterns of behavior. Nevertheless, the sages had confidence in the general regularity and justice of order, and they trusted in the goodness and life-sustaining providence of God” (p. 151).
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 29-30.
\textsuperscript{94} John H. Walton, \textit{Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 22. Walton goes on to state, “Both the instructions of Egypt and the proverbs of Mesopotamia stand as further examples of the idea that wisdom compilations were used widely in the ancient world as a means of offering principles that could serve as guides for living. These principles are in effect mandates in the pursuit of wisdom if order is to be maintained in society” (p. 302).
and surely he was an exceptionally creative and inventive artist, the author of Job, like any other artist, could not have been totally detached from the artistic milieu of his culture." According to Hoffman, the cultural environment that shaped the artistic conventions of Job were the whole of biblical literature as well as the world of ancient Near Eastern wisdom compositions. Hoffman is not alone in his opinion concerning the writer of Job being familiar with literary techniques and motifs from the wisdom compositions of the ancient world. John Gray comments to this end stating that “the sages also knew of the literary prototype in the Mesopotamian tradition of the worthy sufferer which they elaborated with emphasis rather on the moral problem of the Dialogue than the final vindication in the Epilogue.”

The assessment that the author of Job overtly reflected literary techniques and the theological quandaries prevalent in the wisdom literature of his time persists in recent scholarship. Thus, several modern scholars have reflected upon the genius of the author of Job. Konrad Schmid’s comments are representive of this in noting that, “…the degree of education and intelligence it would have taken to compose the Book of Job would have been impossible for a person not trained in the scholarly tradition.” Schmid explicitly mentions the high degree of scholarly knowledge in Israelite, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek texts that would have been necessary to write the dialogues of Job. This indicates, in his opinion, that the writer was likely a professional scribe from the Jerusalem temple.

What is important to note about Schmid’s observations is the emphasis he places on the idea that the writer of Job may have been a trained scholar familiar with the traditions of other

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civilizations. In a similar vein, Sara Denning-Bolle specifically indicates the adaptability of the wisdom traditions in diverse ancient Near Eastern civilizations. With regard to wisdom in Mesopotamia and other cultures, Denning-Bolle states that the ancients “could converse with each other about wisdom across national boundaries and there is no evidence that they were ever upset about problems of translation between them. What is most important to us is that what came to their mind with ‘wisdom’ inspired them in very ordinary conversation.” Hence, wisdom stirred within and across the civilizations of the ancient Near East.

1.2.4 Job in the Literary World of the Ancient Near East

The conspicuous aspects that are shared between Job and ancient Near Eastern wisdom materials—both at the literary and theological levels—have led scholars to question how these features proliferated and transcended various civilizations. Some scholars have suggested that the roots of this wisdom tradition started in schools that promoted writing wisdom compositions as parts of their curricula. Concerning the wisdom tradition in Sumer, Bendt Alster states that “it is highly possible that they [Sumerian wisdom compositions] originated in the atmosphere of the Sumerian scribal schools, the edubba of the early second millennium B.C., which undoubtedly left lasting marks in the literary creativity of the following centuries, even far outside the original Mesopotamian arena.” This is to say, the wisdom tradition of Sumer which produced compositions like the Sumerian “Man and His God” may have been the impetus for the propagation of the common features that biblical wisdom literature shares with compositions from other ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Scribal schools may have also been present in Egypt.

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98 It is important to note that, despite the noticeable parallels between Job and ancient Near Eastern literature, there is no specific evidence conclusively demonstrating that the Joban poet had direct knowledge of Mesopotamian wisdom texts. The parallels that are evident between and Job and Mesopotamian wisdom literature could have conceivably been inherited in the Canaanite-Israelite literary tradition.


according to Katharine Dell, who points out that the “Instruction of Amenemopet…was used as a school text for many centuries and ‘copied’ by successive generations of those learning to write.”\textsuperscript{101}

Dell’s observation is particularly significant because of the oft-treated, almost identical section shared between the “Instruction of Amenemope”\textsuperscript{102} and the biblical wisdom book of Proverbs\textsuperscript{103}—as well as some shared imagery between Amenemope and Job.\textsuperscript{104} Some have suggested that this close resemblance of Israel’s compositions to others in the ancient Near East might be a result of scribal interaction. Scribal contact is an issue discussed by David Carr, who asserts that there was indeed shared scribal activity between Egypt and Israel.\textsuperscript{105} Carr states:

There are some indicators that Egypt played a particularly important role in the genesis of state scribalism in early Judah and Israel…Yet there is more specific evidence of Egyptian influence on early highland written textuality…In addition, we have widespread documentation for the use of Egyptian hieratic numerals in later highland inscriptions. Since these numerals were not used in Egypt itself during the time of the later monarchy and do not appear to have been used in Phoenicia at all, they probably were adopted directly from Egypt at an early point in the development of the Judean/Israelite monarchies.\textsuperscript{106}

Karel van der Toorn additionally comments on the influence of Egyptian scribes on Israelite literature, stating that, “(s)cribes interpreted texts and tongues: the knowledge of foreign languages was part of their profession. The cosmopolitan spirit of scribal culture made it open to influences from the outside world,” hence, “the influence of Egypt in pre-exilic times…on the

\textsuperscript{102} Henceforth referred to as Amenemope.
\textsuperscript{103} See Prov. 22:17-24:22
\textsuperscript{104} See section 5.3.
\textsuperscript{105} For a synopsis of Carr’s hypothesis of the interaction between Egyptians and the inhabitants of Canaan/Israel from the Middle Kingdom through the biblical period, see David M. Carr, Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 84-85.
scribal culture of Israel, and thus on the Bible, is widely recognized.” 107 This interaction between Israelite and Egyptian scribes might explain the verbatim sections of Proverbs and Amenemope. However, it is not necessary to look further than the attestations of the internal witness of the Hebrew Bible to see that there was interaction, not only between the kingdoms of the Bible, but also sages from other countries. As Carr states, “(b)iblical texts themselves attest to the international character of instructional literature. They attribute wisdom to non-Israelite sages (e.g. 1 Kgs 5:10-11 [ET 4:30-31]; Psalms 88 and 89 [both ‘wisdom songs’—משכיל; Prov 30:1; 31:1; Job)…” 108 It is therefore, plausible that words, phrases, imagery, and literary techniques could have been transmitted among ancient Near Eastern sages and scribes, and in due course made it into the literature of various kingdoms. 109 The potential influence of Amenemope upon a section of Proverbs 110 could be enough evidence to suggest the possibility of this type of sharing in other wisdom texts as well—perhaps even with Job. 111

Nevertheless, striving to ascertain how texts from different ancient civilizations came to resemble one another based upon potential scribal activity can be arduous with few definitive results. For this undertaking to be properly carried out it necessarily requires, not only providing a theory concerning how literature was transmitted from one culture to another, but also analysis of literary genres and formats, in addition to consideration of the historical and sociological contexts in which the compositions were produced. For these reasons, John Walton suggests a...
less stringent method of comparison which analyzes a traceable continuum of thought concerning certain matters in the ancient Near East. Walton states that there is enough common ground across ancient Israel and other civilizations in order to evaluate their shared cognitive environments.\textsuperscript{112} Hence, to Walton, the question does not so much concern if and how ancient Near Eastern cultures borrowed ideas and literature from one another through their scribes. Rather, Walton claims that the ideas which Israel shared with the ancient Near Eastern civilizations around them simply reflected the concepts that they held in common with their ancient Near Eastern environment.\textsuperscript{113} The texts of the ancient Near East give the biblical interpreter a window into the cognitive environments that were prevalent in the region during the biblical period. Hence, Walton notes that a “cognitive environment is shared and can result in similarities in literature that are simply the outgrowth of that common cognitive environment, perhaps stimulated by occasional, vague, or indirect exposure to foreign literature.”\textsuperscript{114} This is evident in Job, according to Walton, in that the author uses the mentality of the ancient Near East—represented in the just retribution paradigm of Job’s friends—with the intent of countering it, thereby accomplishing the point of the book.\textsuperscript{115}

\textbf{1.3 Goals of this Study}

This review of select commentaries and other literature that considers Job in its ancient Near Eastern context highlights the significance of broadly understanding the ancient literary world for proper interpretation. The ancient wisdom tradition particularly sheds light upon the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 149, 304.
\item Walton’s further comments are helpful in understanding his approach. “Our ability to measure literary debt is so limited as to make such speculation hazardous if not presumptuous. Nevertheless, we need not be in denial that some literature may have been more directly influenced by other literature and therefore retained a greater resemblance….One cannot therefore easily speak of debt, but must be content to speak of commonalities that reveal that Israel shared a stake in the cognitive environment of the ancient world.” Ibid., 304.
\item Ibid., 23. Interestingly, Alster briefly notes that “a critical attitude towards existing values…may be considered an unmistakable sign of ancient Near Eastern ‘wisdom literature’.” Alster, \textit{Wisdom of Ancient Sumer}, 5. Viewed from this perspective, Job is indeed wisdom literature which is evident through the subversion of traditional wisdom of his friends and the Proverbs.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
common theological motifs, shared literary techniques, rhetoric, and imagery between Job and its ancient Near Eastern parallels, thereby providing not only a pragmatic foundation, but also an impetus for further comparative investigation. Nonetheless, additional comparative analysis would benefit from a redirection in emphasis—one that affirms the obvious righteous sufferer motif, while also giving worthy accentuation to the other corresponding themes that contribute to the unique character of the book.

The prosperity of the wicked is an underexplored theme in the book of Job. Few have considered this significant motif to be a main theme of the book, let alone focus on the exegesis of specific passages that apply to the fate of the wicked and suggest how this analysis might relate to the purpose of the book at large. Additionally, reviewing the scholarly literature that focuses on Job in its ancient Near Eastern literary context reveals the paucity of work that concentrates on a thorough comparative analysis of the depictions of the prosperity of the wicked in the book of Job, the Hebrew Bible in general, and other ancient Near Eastern literature.

This work will extensively focus on the theme of the prosperity of the wicked in the book of Job, other biblical and extra-biblical literature, and is a necessary project in a discipline where the majority of the past research has concentrated on only a portion of the issue at hand. A comparative study of Job in relation to other biblical texts (e.g., Proverbs and Psalms), and vis à vis other ancient Near Eastern literature will lend insight into the significance of the rhetoric and imagery in the first and second dialogical cycles where the theme concerning the fate of the wicked is especially prominent. An improved understanding of the rhetoric and imagery of these sections will inevitably inspire heightened appreciation of the poetry of Job, and reflect the genius of the writer.
\textbf{1.4 Research Methods}

This research is essentially pragmatic in that it strives to present intelligible readings of Job in the contexts of the book, the Bible, and the ancient Near East, that portray the theme of the prosperity of the wicked as a major motif throughout the first two dialogues. Much can be learned from Habel, whose method of reading emphasizes, in order of importance, understanding the biblical text in its contexts. Habel states:

We have sought to interpret each verse by determining its sense in the immediate context of the unit where it is embedded, in the context of speeches by the same character or related speeches by another character, in the literary context of the book of Job as a whole (including the so-called epilogue and prologue), in the wider context of biblical wisdom literature and the Old Testament in general, and finally within the broad context of related materials from the world of the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{116}

Habel's progression of reading, and his inclusion of the prologue and epilogue, are fundamental to this study, which focuses on the book of Job as it is currently constituted in the Masoretic Text.\textsuperscript{117} Thus, this is essentially a synchronic reading of the entirety of the book as presented in the MT as the starting point of analysis.\textsuperscript{118} Nevertheless, the tools of modern critical study enable examination of various textual witnesses of the Bible as well as extra-biblical materials. The following sections present concise justifications and methodologies relating to the five areas that are emphasized in this comparative study.

\textsuperscript{116} Habel, \textit{Job}, 24-25.
\textsuperscript{117} More specifically, this is the \textit{Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia} (eds. by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Stuttgart: 1983). Hereafter referred to at the MT. See Andersen’s comments regarding the significance of the MT as a starting point in Andersen, \textit{Job}, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{118} Greenstein’s comments on his method of reading in “The Problem of Evil,” 339, are conducive to this analysis: “I seek to read the book as it has been constituted, allowing for the possibility that outlooks and perspectives may shift in the course of reading.”
1.4.1 Textual Criticism

While continuing to relate to the book of Job as a whole, this study distinctly centers on the portions of the first two dialogical cycles that display the emergence of the doctrine of just retribution, and the intensification of accusations against Job. This section culminates with Job’s extensive criticism of his companions’ dogma in chapter 21. In order to ascertain the most responsible comparative analysis of the sections of the first two cycles of dialogue which relate to the fate of the wicked, it is necessary to establish the biblical text under consideration. Therefore, before an evaluation of the meaning of any given text, the major problematic textual issues within the passage must be addressed. The relationships between the current MT and the various textual witnesses (e.g., Old Greek, Targums, and Latin) will be considered with the intent of coming closer to putative original form(s) of the relevant pericopes.

1.4.2 Philology

Establishing a passage through textual criticism does not determine what the language of a particular text is intended to convey. In order to ascertain what the language of the text means, it is necessary to turn to philology. Philology is the next reasonable course of action after textual criticism when exegeting passages in Job because of the well-noted difficult sections and numerous hapax legomena characteristic of the book. This project is distinctly philological as it intends to locate the fundamental meaning of the language of a given passage in order to understand the text of Job in its ancient Near Eastern linguistic context.

Therefore, the selected passages from Job will be analyzed by paying close attention to what the context suggests relative to the meanings of words and phrases. Additionally, observations will be made regarding how words and meanings may have developed throughout the course of various stages of the Hebrew language. The incorporation of a comparative component into the linguistic analysis will be helpful in transcending the Hebrew language to other
Semitic languages, of the same or different time periods, in order to glean the potential significance of words and phrases from these language systems. Only subsequent to establishing the text and discovering the significance of the words of a given passage, will it then be possible to analyze a given passage as a unit. The imagery of these sections of Job will then be examined in addition to a rhetorical and theological analysis.

1.4.3 Imagery

This area of analysis incorporates an exploration of the related ancient Near Eastern extra-biblical texts which include comparable imagery to that which is used during the discussions on the fate of wicked during the first two rounds of dialogue in Job. Since the wicked are those who do not honor God, it will be important to analyze imagery in thematically corresponding literature in which others are portrayed as impious. An advantage of analyzing texts at the level of imagery is that symbols and metaphors permit the exploration of similar themes among related languages as well as different languages groups. This analysis will be performed with the intent of examining the ideas that may have been shared between non-biblical compositions and Job.

This analysis of imagery will be carried about by reading the respective texts in conjunction with one another and not looking for diachronic particulars or searching for dependence. Hence, the phrase intertextuality can be applied in the manner used by Greenstein as “a way of looking at texts in relation to one another, bringing to bear the fact that just as all discourse incorporates, comprises, already made discourse, so do all texts incorporate, comprise, already made texts.”¹¹⁹ Viewing texts in this manner, there is no need to look for chronological precedence while analyzing imagery. Greenstein continues, “(t)here is no reason that one cannot read texts one before the

other rather than side by side if one chooses to, without committing oneself to a historical claim of chronological precedence.” In agreement with these cogent statements, I will explore imagery connected with the fate of the wicked, starting with Job and moving to texts from the ancient Near East, with the intent of analyzing how the shared imagery contributes to understanding the sections of Job that relate to this issue.

1.4.4 Rhetorical Criticism/Considerations

Rhetoric, as it is defined as the art of persuasion, was used by the poet of Job to depict Job’s friends’ developing their speeches with the intent of compellingly outlining their main points within the context of the ancient Near East. Job’s companions presented their arguments in a convincing manner throughout their discourses, striving to initially compel Job to change his ways. My goal in rhetorically analyzing the text of select passages in Job is to examine how each section is crafted in order to persuasively depict the points of the characters. I intend to analyze the infrastructure of each passage and its component parts with a focus on providing the most sensible

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120 Ibid. 68.
121 Leo G. Perdue, "Introduction," in *Scribes, Sages, and Seers: The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World* (ed. Leo Perdue; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 10. The discussion on rhetoric is on pp. 10-12. James Muilenburg pioneered the notion that rhetorical analysis as it pertains to the Hebrew Bible is concerned with “understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole.” James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond,” 88 (1969): 8. According to Muilenburg, the first step of this rhetorical analysis entails ascertaining the particular sections of a biblical text that treats a specific topic and determining where they begin and end. Establishing the scope of the distinct pericopes permits the researcher to consequently analyze the delineated unit and search for the significance of the primary motif of the passage (p. 9). After establishing the pericopes, this analysis progresses to determine the infrastructure of each composition as well as seeking out its component parts. In exposing and analyzing the component parts of a particular section, the researcher strives to discover the authorial intent. Muilenburg lucidly states that, “a responsible and proper articulation of the words in their linguistic patterns and in their precise formations will reveal to us the texture and fabric of the writer’s thought, not only what it is and he thinks, but as he thinks it” (p. 10).

Phyllis Trible specifically points out five issues that have emerged regarding Muilenburg’s method since his 1968 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address. The foremost concern that Trible presents is that Muilenburg’s method may not be adequately concerned with discovering how the author(s) utilize rhetoric to write persuasively. An additional concern is that Muilenburg never makes clear as to whether rhetorical analysis is a synchronic or diachronic approach. Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 33-47. All of these concerns factor into the research method for the current work—a synchronic investigation which endeavors to observe how Job’s friends used exquisite language to prove their points.

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explanation regarding how the unit relates to our topic. This analysis does not necessarily concern itself with striving to discover the author’s original thoughts or intentions, but rather, to make sense out of Job’s and his friends’ often challenging speeches. I will mainly study these texts synchronically: yet, I will use diachronic tools when necessary in order to investigate how a particular word, phrase, or idea might have developed through time.

1.4.5 Theological Perspectives

At its most fundamental level, the biblical text considers the nature of the religious beliefs of, not only Israel, but also her neighbors. More specifically, the question regarding the prosperity of the wicked is inherently a theological matter because it belongs to the problem of theodicy, which is an issue that presupposes the divine. Therefore, as I systematically analyze the texts at hand, I intend to continuously consider the characters’ portrayal of the divine and potential allusions made directly to deities, or through allusion and metaphorical imagery. These observations from the biblical text will serve as the basis for comparative theological reflection with extra-biblical texts.

1.5 A Contribution to Comparative Work

The goals stated above will be pursued in an effort to set the trajectory of this particular study toward an emphasis on one of the shared themes between Job and ancient Near Eastern literature that is commonly overlooked. The goal is not, of course, to propose a reductionistic overarching theme of the entire book (e.g. the righteous sufferer motif) by suggesting that the prosperity of the wicked is the most dominant and/or important subject of Job. This type of claim, in fact, would inherently depreciate research on other topics shared by Job and ancient Near Eastern literature. It is my hope that this project will be a small step in advancing the comparative work carried out by scholars of Job and ancient Near Eastern literature by broadening the
discussion to include various themes shared by the book of Job and the plethora of diverse literature that has emerged from ancient civilizations around Israel.\footnote{Before continuing a word should be said about transliteration. Since this project deals predominantly with Semitic language materials, I have included the normalized transliterations of the original cuneiform Semitic languages when possible (i.e., Ugaritic and Akkadian). All Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Greek words and phrases I have left in their natural scripts. I have not included Sumerian and Egyptian transliterations as these languages go beyond my areas of proficiency.}
2 Round 1—“The Problem of the Prosperity of the Wicked”

2.1 Introduction to the Conflict over the Fate of the Wicked

Job’s friends were supposed to provide consolation. Upon seeing Job in his wretched state, they tore their clothes, sat with him and wept, not saying a word for seven days. It was not until Job cursed the day of his birth that his friends felt the need to respond. Eliphaz, presumably the eldest, speaks first, provoking a thread of conversation relating to the fate of the wicked that develops and increases in intensity over the first two rounds of dialogue, until it is ultimately culminated by Job’s response in chapter 21.

As the discussion over the first two rounds progresses, Job’s friends eventually conclude that he has transgressed, whether he knows it or not, and therefore must endure the retribution associated with his offense. Job’s friends are not alone in their conclusions that breaching the commands of the divine provokes affliction. Jean Bottéro notes the common thought amongst sufferers in ancient Mesopotamia which consisted of “a posteriori reasoning that [misfortune] most often implied, in the absence of any memory of a consciously committed sin was that ‘If I am unhappy it is because I must have sinned!’”¹²³ Likewise, Job’s friends are confident by the second round of speeches that he is unhappy because he must have sinned. This becomes progressively evident by their comparison of Job’s circumstances to the egregious fate of the wicked—starting with Zophar in chapter 11.

Job, indeed, had not committed any transgression worthy of the suffering he encounters. Though never claiming to be sinless, Job feared God and proved to be exceedingly conscientious in his cultic responsibilities. Nevertheless, Job suffered. However, it was not simply Job’s

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suffering that caused him to reflect upon the justice of God. Job’s anguish despite his religious diligence, along with his observations that the wicked wrongly prosper, lead Job to conclude that God is unjust. Furthermore, Job’s friends delineate their perspective of the retribution of the wicked, and by the end of the second round of speeches, Job conspicuously fits into their blueprint. In lieu of providing consolation, Job’s companions provoke Job to indict God by suggesting that he is one of the wicked, and eventually denounce him as such. This chapter is a survey of selected passages which follow the conversation regarding the fate of the wicked in the first round of speeches.

2.2 “Evil or Agitated”: The Meaning of רָשָׁע in Job 3:17

Finding those passages which relate to the fate of the wicked is key in tracking the thread of discussion relating to this issue between Job and his companions. A reasonable starting point is the analysis of the first passage where the word רָשָׁע appears in Job. Yet, an investigation into the word רָשָׁע in Job 3:17 yields not only an unexpected result, but also foreshadows the perpetual need to carefully decipher rhetoric and context throughout Job in order to properly follow the characters’ discussion concerning the fate of the wicked.

2.2.1 Summary and the Traditional Understanding of רְשָׁעִים in Job 3:17

Peculiar circumstances surround the first time the word רָשָׁע is used in Job 3:17. This verse is conventionally translated:

“There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest.” (NRSV)

Most commentators and Bible translations render the word רְשָׁע as “wicked,” suggesting that the second line of 3:17 indicates that the wicked cease trembling in the realm of the dead. 125

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124 BDB, 957.
125 See for example the ESV, KJV, ASV, NIV translations of the Bible as well as the following renderings in recent commentaries: “There the wicked cease raging!” Habel, Job, 99. “There the wicked cease to rage,” Clines,
However, this rendering is not universally accepted and it is essential to understand what this passage communicates about the רְשֵׁים in order to assess how it might relate to the discussion concerning the fate of the wicked.

In the context of this passage, Job curses the day of his birth (v. 3) and wishes he had immediately died upon leaving the womb (v. 11). Job then envisions what it would be like in the realm of the dead (v. 13) had he perished. There he claims he would be quiet, implying the calming of his distress, which is further corroborated by the verb אֶשְקוֹט in parallel with the phrase יָׁנוּח לִי “it would be at rest for me.” Job perceives the location of the dead as a resting place from his intolerable life where he would enjoy the company of nobility (vv. 14-15). Job’s desire of death upon exiting the womb intensifies until he exclaims that he wishes he would have been stillborn and would have never seen light (v. 16). In this statement, Job equates light (אוֹר) with the realm of the living. Seeing the light is a privilege bestowed upon those who have been born alive, and is a benefit denied to those who are in the grave and/or stillborn.

After wishing he had been stillborn, Job takes another trip into the realm of the dead and describes what it would be like if he were there (v. 17). In v. 17b, Job states that the weary are Job 1-20, 68. “Even the wicked know peace here and the weary are at rest.” Wilson, Job, 40. “The wicked cease generating turmoil,” Crenshaw, Reading Job, 52. “The wicked cease (their) agitation,” Longman, Job, 102. See Mariano Gómez Aranda, El Comentario de Abraham Ibn Ezra al Libro de Job: Edición Crítica, Traducción y Estudio Introductorio (Literatura Hispano-Hebra 6; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Instituto de Filología, 2004), 33, and Greenstein, “Features of Language,” 91-92. Crenshaw, Reading Job, 52, Wilson, Job, 40. Nobility is also depicted residing in Sheol in Isa 14:9-11 where they are found deriding the king of Babylon upon entering the underworld. Habel, Job, 110. Despite these harsh words, Job never contemplates suicide though he does prefer death to being subject to a capricious God (see discussion below relating to 9:20-24). Habel, Job, 63. In 6:8 Job petitions God to crush him and cut him off because Job truly thinks that he will find comfort after being crushed and cut off by God (v. 10). Job would rather his life end sooner than later (v. 11). Yet, even as Job lists his horrific physical condition in 7:5, and states that he hates his life so much that he would prefer being strangled than living (7:15), there is still no evidence that Job contemplates taking his own life. Job, rather, wishes that he could completely blot out his existence. This wish proves to be unfulfillable as Job obviously cannot alter the past so as to erase the reality of his existence. Crenshaw, Reading Job, 47-48.

126 Ibid., 48. Perdue states, “(l)ife is described in terms of the gift of light, which in the context of birth imagery points to the first experience of the newborn child.” Wisdom in Revolt, 102. The dichotomy between light and darkness in Job is further treated in section 4.1.
able to rest (ץָנֹה) in the realm of the dead. The traditional approach to the first line of v. 17 is to identify the רְשָׁעִים who dwell in the realm of the dead with the wicked and suggest that they cease trembling (חָֽדְלוּ רֹגֶז). Following this line of interpretation, Job is saying in v. 17 that if he were to die, he would be with the “wicked” finding rest as a result of the discontinuance of his shaking.

2.2.2 Problems with Understanding רְשָׁעִים as “Wicked” in Job 3:17

2.2.2.1 Immediate Context of Job 3:17

It is reasonable to suggest that the broader context of Job up until 3:17 points away from the word רָשָׁע referring to the wicked. Up to this point in the book, there is no clear indication that the subject of righteousness versus wickedness, and their respective consequences, arise as themes. Additionally, the usage of certain key words similar in meaning to רָשָׁע is conspicuously absent. For example, the terms חָֽנֵף “godless” or שֹׁכְחֵי אֵל “forgetters of God” which are likened to the word רָשָׁע in other part of Job do not appear in this context. Wickedness (רָעָּה) in general does emerge as a theme in chapter 3. Knowing that these words and concepts pervade other sections of Job relating to the wicked, it is sensible to expect them to surface in this section as well if רָשָׁע were to refer to the wicked as it does in other parts of Job.

2.2.2.2 The Problem of Parallelism

There are additional problems with labeling the רְשָׁעִים as the “wicked” in this particular passage. A problem arises in the immediate context of the verse in that the phrase חָֽדְלוּ רֹגֶז is similar in meaning to the word יָנוּח. This might not seem to be of great consequence at first glance, but

131 Despite accepting the traditional definition of רָשָׁע Clines concedes, “(f)or a book that is so dominated by intellectual issues of theodicy, it is amazing to find here (chapter 3) not one strictly theological sentence, not a single question about the meaning of his suffering, not a hint that it may be deserved, not the slightest nod to the doctrine of retribution.” Clines, Job 1-20, 104.
134 Job 8:13.
suspicion of parallelism between the two lines arises upon further noticing that the word שָׁם is located in the first position of the both of the lines of v. 17. Hence, if שָׁם is in the first position in both lines of the verse, and the phrase חָׁדְלוּ רֹגֶז is similar in meaning to the word והיו, it is reasonable to expect the word רְשָׁעִים and the phrase יְגִיעֵי כֹח to be semantically corresponding terms.136 If the weary (יְגִיעֵי כֹח) are depicted as resting in the realm of the dead, and the רְשָׁעִים are unambiguously parallel to them, then perhaps the רְשָׁעִים are also finding rest in the realm of the dead. This suggestion is compatible with the transitive usage of the verb חדל in the sense of “to cease”137 or “to give something up.”138 Thus, as opposed to רְשָׁעִים referring to those who cause turmoil, this context seems to better suggest that the רְשָׁעִים are those who are relieved of turmoil/agitation (רְשָׁעִים).

2.2.2.3 Inner-Biblical Insight & Evidence from Job 34:29

Further contextual insight can be gained by looking back at Job 3:13. In this verse, Job expresses his desire to lie down and be quiet by stating, “For now I would lie down and be quiet” (כִי-ע תָׁה שָׁכ בְתִי וְאֶשְקוֹט). This yearning is paralleled with the ambiguous phrase, יָׁש נְתִי אָׁז יָׁנוּח לִי (“I will lie down and it will rest for me”). It is interesting that the 3ms qal form of the verb נָוח is used here as opposed to Job simply stating “I would rest” (אנח). Additionally, one might expect the hiphil paradigm to indicate that something previously mentioned would cause Job to rest (i.e. יָׁנִיח לִי) from his current anguish. It seems that in v. 13, Job is stating that in lying down (שקט), becoming quiet (שָׁכ), and sleeping (ישן), he will achieve some rest.

The next clue into what Job might petition rest from is in v. 17 where the verb “to rest” (יָּנוּח) is used once again. At first glance, it is not exactly clear from what the weary rest from in the realm of the dead. At this point, a look at Isa 14:3a is instructive. It reads, “And it will be, in

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136 This is contra Crenshaw (Reading Job, 52) who understands these words to constitute a merism signifying Sheol gathering all people—both the wicked and oppressed. This merism is better understood by comparing the great of vv. 14-15 with the small of vv. 17-19. See Clines, Job 1-20, 73.
137 BDB, 292.
138 HALOT, 1:292. See for example, Judg 9:9, 11, 13 where the verb נָוח takes an accusative.
the day the LORD causes you to rest (ךָהָׁנִיח  יְהוָּה לְ) from your pain and from your turmoil (ץַרְגָּזֶ)." Here the verb ניח is used with the preposition ל and an object pronoun to bring about rest from turmoil/agitation רֹגֶז. This is the same pattern in Job 3:13 (ךָוּחָּנִיח  רֹגֶז) but that which Job gains rest from is not mentioned at this juncture. As the reader continues through v. 17 it becomes clear that Job is stating that if he were in the realm of the dead, he would be able to rest from being in turmoil (ץַרְגָּזֶ). The term רוּזֶז of v. 17 functions as the direct object of the verb וַחָּדְל and refers to a condition which comes to an end for the weary in the realm of the dead.

In the light of this background, how can we best understand the term רְשָׁעִים in the context of our verse? Some insight can be gained concerning the significance of the word רְשָׁע in v. 17 by examining how שְקִט وּרְשָׁע are used together in Job 34:29:139

"If He makes quiet, who can agitate? If He hides (his) face, who can see him? He is over the nation and the person alike"

The location of the conjunctive phrase וּמִי in both 29a and b indicates a relationship between the lines, though the dissimilar meanings of the words in these lines suggests that they are not intended to be read with the same effect. It appears that the function of the phrase וּמִי in line b is to juxtapose two opposite actions. That is to say, the hiding of the face (י סְתֵר פָׁנִים) is the opposite of seeing/beholding him (וּיְשוּרֶ) which is preceded by the phrase וּמִי. Given the clarity of this line, it is reasonable that the phrase וּמִי functions in the same capacity in v. 29a. This means that the verb יָׁנוּח could sensibly be understood as the opposite action of the verb שְקִט. Here the verb שְקִט points to God quieting, which means that the sense of the question presented is: If He (God) makes quiet, who can agitate? There is no connotation of wickedness implied through this question. The corresponding verbal root רֶשֶׁע is used in the sense of bringing the opposite effect.

of quieting. This shows that the root, and its corresponding substantival words, do not always denote wickedness. In the context of Job 34:29 the word actually seems to suggest disquieting/unsettling. Taking this into consideration, the word רָשָׁע depicting someone who is uneasy/anxious/restless is indeed a plausible solution to its seemingly odd usage in 3:17.

2.2.2.4 Plausible Meaning of רָשָׁע in Job 3:17

Taking all of this evidence into account, it is reasonable to conclude that the word רָשָׁע as it is used in Job 3:17 does not signify the wicked but rather, points to someone who is agitated and thus, uneasy, anxious, and restless. Therefore, this verse is best translated:

“There the restless cease troubling, and there the weary rest.”

This meaning distinctly fits the context of Job 3 where Job expresses his desire to be in the realm of the dead where those who suffer from restlessness finally cease experiencing turmoil. This realm of the dead would hence serve as a consolation to Job who cannot escape the vicissitudes of his present life. Job’s desire is to be at peace, which according to Job, is only found in the realm of the dead.140

2.3 “Lions, the Wicked, and Retribution”: Eliphaz 4:10-11

It now makes sense that the reference to the רְשָׁעִים in 3:17 does not refer to the “wicked,” but rather, to those who restlessly tremble. However, Job cursing the day of his birth serves as a catalyst which provokes the reactions of his friends, engaging them in a dispute141 which extensively focusses on the fate of the wicked. Job 4 draws attention to the wicked by introducing

140 Tur-Sinai has also come to the conclusion that v. 17a refers to people who tremble and emends לֶחֶם לָשֵׁם to רְעֹשִים or רְעַשִים. Tur-Sinai, Job, 64. The analysis above has shown that it is possible to come to a similar conclusion regarding the sense of the line without resorting to textual emendation.
141 Habel, Job, 102.
a metaphor referring to lions. Close attention to the metaphor’s context within the chapter, as well as looking at similar metaphors in comparable ancient Near Eastern literature, help reveal the reference to the wicked through lions, and Eliphaz’s assertion regarding their fate.

2.3.1 Sagacious Instigation

It is widely accepted that the first round of speeches begins rather cordially in comparison to the discourse to that follows. Consequently, it is understandable why the first accusation against Job would come in the form of indirect speech—namely, a metaphor. The wicked will certainly fail and reap the consequences of their unrighteous deeds, according to Eliphaz. Yet, Eliphaz does not yet directly accuse Job. Eliphaz demonstrates an element of respect for Job and notes that Job was a person of fine character who once instructed and strengthened the feeble (4:3-4). This type of courtesy will not last, but for now Eliphaz only goes as far as to hint that Job has transgressed. As C.-L. Seow points out, “Eliphaz’s words are, however, double-edged. On the one hand, he may be encouraging Job and offering to be helpful to Job as Job had been helpful to others. On the other hand, Eliphaz’s observation may be heard as disparaging, pointing to Job’s hypocrisy, as if Job is not practicing what he used to preach, so to speak.”

Correspondingly, Job 4-5 are charged with language alluding to the destiny of those who do not honor God. Despite Eliphaz’s concession of Job’s former integrity, he criticizes Job for being “terrified” (חֲפַר) and not capable of withstanding the trial that has come upon him (v. 5). This rebuke foreshadows the harsh implications of the answers to the rhetorical questions Eliphaz

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142 J. Gerald Janzen sums up this view well in stating, “Eliphaz responds to Job diffidently and tentatively, seeking to offer to him the encouraging advice he formerly had offered others in times of their misfortune.” Job (IBC; ed. James Luther Mays; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1985), 71, see also p. 75. See also Andersen, Job, 118, Habel, Job, 30-31, Wilson, Job, 43-44.
143 Habel, Job, 124, Wilson, Job, 44.
145 Seow, Job 1-21, 383-84.
subsequently asks Job. “Job,” Eliphaz inquires, “isn’t your fear (of God) your confidence? Isn’t your hope the integrity (תֹּם) of your way?” (v. 6). Job indeed feared God, and was a person of integrity (תָׁם [1:1, 8-9; 2:3]), yet Eliphaz is under the assumption that if Job truly fears God and is innocent, he should be accepting and patient rather than anxious as he undergoes suffering. Through the rhetorical questions presented in v. 6, Eliphaz assumes that Job will agree with his premises which establish the foundation for Eliphaz’s belief in the doctrine of just retribution—which he proceeds to succinctly present in vv. 7-11.

The innocent do not perish (אָׁבָד) and are not destroyed (וּנִכְחָד [v. 7]), because according to what Eliphaz has allegedly seen, the plowers of iniquity (חֹרְשֵי אָׁוֶן) are those who reap the consequences of their misdeeds and perish by the breath of God (וּמִנִשְמַת אֱלוֹהִים אָבָד [v. 8-9]). Eliphaz conspicuously suggests the tragic fate of those who do not honor God, and proceeds to further this argumentation through the usage of lion imagery.

2.3.2 Lion Imagery in Job 4:10-11

However clear Eliphaz’s suggestions might be, his apparent sensitivity to Job’s tragic situation prohibits complete straightforwardness at this juncture. Yet, this hesitancy does not

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146 This clarification has been added because vv. 6-7 are direct allusions to the prologue (Habel, Job, 121) and it coincides with Job’s character as one who fears God. See also, Andersen, Job, 120. Additionally, this understanding corresponds with how the phrase “fear of God” is used in other biblical wisdom literature (Prov. 1:7, 29; 2:5). Longman, Job, 116, Seow, Job 1-21, 384.

147 Wilson, Job, 44.


149 Crenshaw suggests that by calling Job to “remember (נָּא-זֶכָּר [v. 7]), and appealing to his own senses (רָּאִיתִי [v. 8]), Eliphaz implores Job to agree with the ‘we reap what we sow’ paradigm.” Crenshaw, Reading Job, 57. Nevertheless, it is likely that Eliphaz is not actually referencing the senses as part of an appeal to personal experience. Rather, Eliphaz appears to be presenting traditional wisdom as if it were personal observation. This is particularly evident through Eliphaz’s claim to seeing the demise of the wicked—an event which he subsequently depicts figurative language (v. 9). See Edward L. Greenstein, "On My Skin and in My Flesh: Personal Experience as a Source of Knowledge in the Book of Job," in Bringing the Hidden to Light: Studies in Honor of Stephen A. Geller (eds. Kathyn F. Kravitz and Diane M. Sharon; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 73-74. Job eventually appeals to the senses and human in experience in chapter 21, and faults his friends for having failed to do so in relation to his situation. See section 6.1.

prevent Eliphaz from introducing a discussion of the fate of the wicked, which proves to be a significant thread of conversation throughout the first two dialogues of Job. To start, Eliphaz appropriates a metaphor depicting the fate of a ferocious lion (vv. 10-11). This is a metaphor which was deeply embedded in the Bible and in ancient Near Eastern literature, and is used in our passage to assert that just retribution not only happens, but is carried out by God:

**“The roar of the lion and the voice of the lion and the teeth of the young lions are broken. A lion dies for lack of prey and the sons of the lion are scattered”**

רְיֵה וְקוֹל שָׁחַל וְשִנֵּי כְפִירִים נִתָּעָ לִשְׁאַבֶּד מִבְלִי-טָׁרֶף וּבְנֵי לָׁבִיא יִתְפָּרָּדוּ

It is significant that the allusion to lions in Job 4:10-11 is distinctly metaphorical with the intent of defending the dogma of just retribution for human beings. Though several of the five different words for lion in this passage are used to depict literal fauna in other sections of the Hebrew Bible, these terms are almost exclusively used in context in which they are applied to comfort Job by indirection.” This prevents him from “insisting at this point that the righteous will be relieved of suffering and be restored to good fortune, [rather] he adduces the negative case for the wicked.” Eliphaz’s encouragement of restoration comes later in 5:17-26.

There have been numerous attempts to distinguish between the types of lions referenced in vv.10-11—a task which is far beyond the scope of this study. Yet, it is safe to say that notable commentators considered differentiating the types of lions in Job 4:10-11 to be of consequential significance. For example, according to Tur-Sinaï, שָׁחַל might depict a large beast and not just a lion; כְפִיר is not a young lion but a big one and could potentially refer to a sea animal (cf. Ezck 32:2); and לָׁבִיא is a term depicting a male lion, according to Tur-Sinaï, but portrays a female lion when pointed as לְבִיָּא (cf. Ezck 19:2). Tur-Sinaï, Job, 80. Dhorme states that כְפִיר is the generic term for lion, but claims that שָׁחַל denotes a unique species and translates the word “leopard.” Dhorme notes that the word לָׁבִיא in corresponding Semitic languages (ليث in Arabic, שִנֵּי in Aramaic, and nêšu in Akkadian) all portray this lion as “king of the beasts” (Prov 30:30). The term לָׁבִיא according to Dhorme, has been proven to depict a “lioness.” Dhorme claims that the pointing in Ezck 19:2 is artificial and comments that Isa. 30:6 posits the masculine לָׁבִיא as the companion of the שָׁחַל. Dhorme, Job, 47-48.

Brent Strawn’s exhaustive investigation of lion imagery in the Bible and ancient Near East ultimately finds relatively little to differentiate among all of the terms relating to lion in the Hebrew Bible. Brent A. Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion?: Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (OBO 212; Fribourg Göttingen: Academic Press; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 294-304. Based on Strawn’s exceedingly comprehensive study relating to the words mentioned for lions in this context, it is plausible that the writer of Job is utilizing a variety of words to portray the lion simply for stylistic variation. Concerning the number of words for lion, Greenstein argues that this seems to be a Joban predilection. Edward L. Greenstein, “The Invention of Language in the Poetry of Job,” in *Interested Readers: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David J.A. Clines* (eds. James K. Aitken, et al.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 333. My translations reflect that there is little evidence which coherently distinguishes among the different types of lions.


See Job 38:39 for lion imagery used in a non-metaphorical manner.
portray something other than the literal zoological meaning of the word. The lions of vv. 10-11 are markedly associated with the workers of iniquity of v. 8 and thus, the lion is representative of a person who does not honor God. The consequences of iniquity mentioned in v. 9 are expounded upon through metaphorical imagery in vv. 10-11. This imagery depicts the wicked prospering for a while but ultimately deteriorating.

2.3.3 Inner-Biblical Examination of the Lion- Ezekiel 19:1-9

The fact that lion imagery is used in Job 4:10-11 to depict a wicked person is further corroborated through inner-biblical examination of this imagery. There are striking parallels between the imagery in Job 4:10-11 and Ezek 19:1-9. Through a concise comparison between these pericopes it is possible to note the metaphorical nature of the lion imagery in both passages, as well as the perceived fate of the wicked throughout the Hebrew Bible.

The literary context of Ezek 19:1-9 distinctly points to a metaphorical usage of lion imagery. In v. 1 the prophet is commanded to take up a lament for the princes of Israel. Hence, the subsequent lament is directed to, and signifies, people as opposed to the actual lion(s). The lament starts by alluding to a mother lioness ([לְבִיָׁא] amongst other lions ([אֲרָׁיוֹת]), which lay among the young lions ([כְפִרִים]), rearing her cubs. One of her cubs grew into a young lion ([כְפִיר]) and learned how to tear prey ([טֶרֶף-לִטְרָׁף].) Up to this point, the allusion to the lion is not particularly negative. However, an unfavorable depiction emerges in v. 3b when it becomes evident that the cub of v. 2 grows into a lion that devours people ([אָׁדָם אָׁכָּל].) The metaphorical nature of the passage becomes

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157 Cf. Ps 124:6 to confirm this phrase is a metaphor.
158 The phrase [אָׁדָם אָׁכָּל] is in the singular. More technically “devoured a man.”
increasingly evident in v. 4 in that the nations hear about this lion and, upon it being trapped in their pit, they take it to Egypt with hooks.\footnote{See the description of the apprehension of King Jehoahaz in 2 Kgs 23:31-34 and Jer 22:10-12.}

Upon losing hope in her initial offspring, the mother lioness promotes another one of her cubs to a position of power (v. 5). This second progeny (v. 6), walked about among the lions (אֲרָיוֹת), became a young lion (כְפִיר), and learned to devour prey (לִטְרָׁף), which is personified as in v. 3. This second lion-ruler developed into a more vicious tyrant than the first offspring, breaking down strongholds, devastating cities, and terrifying all those who heard his roar (שְאָׁגָה [v. 7]). However, there were eventually grave consequences for this savage behavior as the peoples surrounding the lion came against him to subdue him. In an act depicting catching wildlife, the people cast a net over him, vanquishing him and trapping him in a pit (v. 8). The lion-ruler is silenced, as he is dragged by hooks like the first lion-ruler, and is brought before the ruler of Babylon to be imprisoned.

The warrant for comparison of Ezek 19:1-9 and Job 4:10-11 is especially clear after reading both passages in their literary contexts. Not only is the metaphorical imagery of the lion apparent, but the semantic parallels are conspicuous. Three of the same words used for lion in Job 4:10-11 are also used in Ezek 19:1-9 (כְפִיר, אֲרָיוֹת, כְפִיר), in addition to the words for “prey” (לִטְרָׁף), and “roar” (שְאָׁגָה). The semantic parallels between these two passages, as well as a variety of other biblical passages that utilize lion imagery to depict the wicked, show that lion imagery for the wicked was a widely understood literary trope. Therefore, it is not surprising that this same imagery appears in other ancient Near Eastern literature.


2.3.4 Lion Imagery in Ancient Near Eastern Compositions

Metaphorical lion imagery is present in several well-known compositions from the ancient Near East. There are striking similarities in Ancient near Eastern compositions that bring to mind the mention of lion in Job and Ezekiel.

Initially, the Sumerian wisdom composition *The Instruction of Šuruppak* from the 3rd millennium B.C.E., records a proverb that refers to a lion as a thief. It states,

*The thief is indeed a lion; when he has been caught, he is indeed a slave* (line 30).

This pithy statement may refer to the tendency of people to blame the theft of missing livestock on a lion, when in fact a person (or a slave) may have indeed been responsible. Through this we are able to see the ancient perception of a lion as strong and mischievous. Whereas *Šuruppak* is a practical composition that lacks the religious inclination of later Mesopotamian and biblical wisdom, the ancient perception of the lion here may perhaps serve as part of the backdrop for the emergence of the lion metaphor in ancient Near Eastern literature. We now turn to other examples of the usage of lion imagery in *Ludlul* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* which shed light unto the conceptual world within which this metaphor emerged in the Bible.

*Ludlul* was an extensively-circulated classic Akkadian poem, suggesting that it was also widely understood—at least in scribal circles. Though there are multiple differences between

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160 Hereafter referred to as *Šuruppak*.
161 The thief is also likened to a lion in the Adab version of *Šuruppak* but compared to a “dragon” in the Abū Şalābīkh recension. Bendt Alster, *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005), 62, 178, 198.
164 Annus and Lenzi suggest that the shape and the format of some of the recovered tablets which contained writing from *Ludlul* indicate that they were scribal training exercises. In their opinion, this demonstrates that *Ludlul* was a poem which was incorporated into the scribal curriculum of the first millennium B.C.E. and “every advanced scribe would have read sections of *Ludlul* just as every high school student reads Shakespeare today.” Other copies of *Ludlul* were found in the libraries of scholars and kings showing that the elite of the social and political capital of the Near East were familiar with this composition. *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi: The Standard Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* (SAACT 7; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2010), ix. Paul-Alain Beaulieu likewise suggests that *Ludlul* was a part of the second stage of learning in the curriculum for those who were training in
the sufferer of *Ludlul* and Job, both of the sufferers are equally subject to intolerable affliction. Whereas Job proceeds to blame God for his unjust hardships,\(^{165}\) the sufferer in *Ludlul* admits to wrongdoing and praises Marduk for alleviating him from his tribulations. In the sufferer’s praise to Marduk for his restoration, he uses lion imagery to depict his liberation from a person who had afflicted him:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Marduk ušaqi rēši</strong></th>
<th>Marduk raised my head.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>imḫaṣ ritti māḫiṣiya</strong></td>
<td>He struck the hand of my striker,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ušaddi kakkišu Marduk</strong></td>
<td>Marduk made him throw down his weapon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ina pī girri āšiliya</strong></td>
<td>On the mouth of the lion, my eater,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iddi napsama Marduk</strong>(^{166})</td>
<td>Marduk put a muzzle. IV:11-15(^{167})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since, unlike *Ludlul*, the *Babylonian Theodicy* is a dialogue between a sufferer and a friend, it is possible to see different perspectives on the issues presented therein. Lion imagery is initially mentioned by the sufferer in his grievance over what he perceives to be disorder. The lion that withholds its offering from the deity is in fact the lion that is best rewarded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>aggu labbu ša ītakkalu dumuq šīri</strong></th>
<th>Has the savage lion who always ate the best meat, ever brought his <em>mašḥassu</em>-flour offering in order to appease a furious godhead?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>akkimilti ilāti šupṭuri ūbil mašḫassu</strong>(^{168})</td>
<td>V: 50-51(^{169})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The friend however, does not perceive the same injustice and reminds the sufferer that there awaits a penalty for the irreligious lion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>gēr būli lāba ša taḫsusu gana bitri</strong></th>
<th>Come, <strong>think about</strong> the lion, the attacker of livestock, which you mentioned. For the</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **gillat nēši īpušu petāssu haštum** | exorcism (*āšipūtu* [exorcist-āšipu or *maššu*]) in Neo-Babylonian schools. See "The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature," in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel* (ed. Richard J. Clifford; SBLSymS 36; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 9-10. \(^{165}\) As will be discussed below in section 2.5. \(^{166}\) Normalized transliteration of *Ludlul* mine—based on Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*. \(^{167}\) Translations of *Ludlul* based on Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* with my own variations. \(^{168}\) Normalized transliteration of the *Theodicy* mine—based on Oshima, *The Babylonian Theodicy*. \(^{169}\) Translations of the *Theodicy* are based on Oshima, *The Babylonian Theodicy*, with my own minor variations.
Along with the passages from Job 4 and Ezekiel 19, it is evident that the imagery of the lion in *Ludlul* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* is used to provide an analogy to the prosperity, and the discomfiture, of the wicked. In *Ludlul* the lion is personified as one who had been striking the sufferer with a weapon in his hand as well as slinging stones at him. Marduk thrashes the hand of the oppressor, and confiscates his sling, thereby alleviating the sufferer’s affliction. In the *Babylonian Theodicy*, the sufferer presents the lion as prospering in spite of his not bringing offerings to appease the deity. The friend answers the sufferer’s evidence that the world is cruel, cites the depredations of the lion, and asserts that the lion meets a bad end, hunted and trapped.

A particularly conspicuous similarity between the lion metaphor in *Ludlul*, the *Theodicy* and the biblical passages lies in the reference to the lion eating. In *Ludlul*, as well as the verses from Ezekiel, the lion’s primary harmful exploit comes in consuming human beings. This is stated a bit less directly in the *Theodicy* though the lion is portrayed as attacking “livestock” and taking “the best meat.” In the passage in Job, that which the lion consumes is not explicitly stated, but the fact that this personified lion is indeed predatory is implicit in the reference to the lion’s teeth (שִנֵּי כְפִירִים), and the lion’s prey (or lack thereof [טָׁרֶף]).

### 2.3.5 Consequences for the Lion

In addition to the semantic and philological parallels that link the imagery in the aforementioned passages, attention to the outcomes of the lions reveals that the metaphors in Job, Ezekiel, *Ludlul*, and the *Theodicy* are used in a similar manner. The purpose of the lion imagery in all of these passages is to reflect the eventual consequences of the wicked’s actions in their respective theological contexts. The consequences depicted in each of the passages bear unmistakable similarities.
Initially, it is obvious that all of the lions suffer some type of physically agonizing retribution for their misdeeds. In *Job* the lion’s teeth are broken\(^{170}\) while in *Ezekiel* the lion is trapped, hooked, and dragged in front of authorities. In *Ludlul* the lion is struck and the deity confiscates their weapons and in the *Theodicy*, the lion trapped in a pit.

Additionally, in all of these passages, an authoritative or divine figure is responsible for the punishment of the lion. As previously stated, it is obvious that Marduk is the chastiser in *Ludlul*, whereas the lion in the *Theodicy* is burned by an anonymous king.\(^{171}\) Eliphaz contends that those who plow iniquity (v. 8) perish by the breath of God (אֱלֹהִים מַנְשֵׁים אֵלֹהִים) and are destroyed by the breath blown out of his nostrils (וּמֵרוּח אֶפֶן בָּלָה) [v. 9]). The mention of the lion in 4:10-11 refers to the explicit antecedent, which is the workers of iniquity of v. 8. The writer of *Ezekiel* 19 does not explicitly identify the deity as the punisher but it is clear in the illustration’s immediate context. The prophet claims to take up the word of the Lord in 18:1 (וְיָהַי דְבַר יְהוָּה אֶל יְהוָּה), which is followed by a chapter that centers on the wicked and the righteous. The lament of chapter 19 flows from the divine prodding of 18:1, and 19:1-9 depicts the demise of the lion which is brought to pass by God who communicated the lament.

Another consequence that the lion suffers is the deprivation of its prey. This suggests that the worker of iniquity eventually experiences a lack of sustenance that results in their demise. In

\(^{170}\) The *hapax legomena* וּנִתָּע in the phrase וּנִתָּע כְפִירוֹ נִתָּע in 4:10 has caused interpreters problems. It is apparently a Hebrew by-form of ניָה “to pull down, to break down” (*BDB*, 683) which was phonologically influenced by contemporary Aramaic. For this reason, we find the consonant ב in place of the כ in ניָה. Greenstein takes this word to be a pseudo-Aramaic idiosyncratic form invented by the Joban poet. See Edward L. Greenstein, "The Language of Job and Its Poetic Function," *JBL* 122 (2003): 663. Evidently, this word is in the *nifal* paradigm meaning “to be broken,” and referring to the lion’s teeth. Cline, *Job* 1-20, 110. Since this verb is unlikely to be the predicate of the phrases “the roar of the lion” and “the voice of the lion,” I understand 10a to be an independent line. The breaking of the lion’s teeth is fitting retribution being that sharp teeth are the lion’s means of committing iniquity. It is with these teeth that the lion prey on the weak and innocent. The wicked also prey on the weak and innocent (see Zophar’s comments in chapter 20 expounded upon in chapter 5 of this work), and retribution comes in the diffusion of their resources and a bitter end to their days. Greenstein, "Metaphors in the Poetry of Job," 188-89.

\(^{171}\) Oshima likens this king to “the Fire-God.” See Oshima, *The Babylonian Theodicy*, 20, line 64.
Job the lion is so deprived of its prey (טָׁרֶף) that it perishes, while in Ezekiel the lion is judged in direct connection to its tearing of prey (לִטְרָׁף, טֶרֶף [vv. 3, 6]) by being forcibly taken off in captivity (vv. 4, 9), and dispossessed of its provisions. Likewise, the attacker of livestock who eats the best meat mentioned in the Theodicy plunges into a trap, putting an end to its devouring. In Ludlul, Marduk punishes the lion that was eating the protagonist by placing a muzzle over its mouth.

2.3.6 Eliphaz the Instigator

The similar usage of the lion metaphor among the preceding compositions is evident through analyzing the outcome of the lion in Job and other biblical and non-biblical ancient Near Eastern imagery. The allusion to the lion in Job displays the incorporation of a popular metaphor to broach the subject of just retribution. Through this allusion, Eliphaz implies that God would eventually bring the wicked to their appropriate demise. This understanding of God’s justice is a fundamental element of the just retribution dogma.

Examining Job 4:10-11 in light of the mentioning of the רְשָׁעִים in 3:17 affirms that Eliphaz is actually the participant who initiates the conversation about the retribution of the wicked in the

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172 There is a verbal clue that links the lion to the workers of iniquity in Job 4. In v. 7 Eliphaz asks, “Who that is innocent has ever perished (אָׁבָׁד)?” He then answers his own question in vv. 8-9, stating that the workers of iniquity “will perish (אָׁבָד) by the breath of God.” The in v. 11, Eliphaz states that the “lion perishes (אֹבֵד) for lack of prey,” thereby connecting the lion with the evil-doer who ultimately suffers the consequences of his actions.

173 For a further summary concerning how lion imagery is used to project the enemy/wicked in the Hebrew Bible see Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion?*, 50-54.

174 Another related consequence for the lion between Ezekiel and Job pertains to how the lions’ actions affect their children. In Ezekiel 19 the lioness is indeed responsible for her cubs’ evil-deeds. The lioness (לָׁבִיא) raised (וּיֹאֵבַד) the initial cub who ravaged human beings. When he was taken away, her hope was lost and so she took another one of her cubs and make him a strong lion (וָיָּתָהּ כְּפִיר שָׁמָּתָהּ). The lion (לָבִיא) in Job loses its sustenance, and consequently its children are dispersed. This portrays another of the punishments for the workers of iniquity in that they are forced to suffer the consequences of their reckless parents. Greenstein states, “What is most significant for what follows in Eliphaz’s speech is that the offspring of the wicked, like the young of the lions, will suffer for having been their parents’ children.” Greenstein, "Metaphors in the Poetry of Job," 189. Eliphaz repeats the fact that the children of the fool will have no one to protect them in 5:4. In this verse, the children of the fool seem to suffer punishment at the city gate with there being no one to intermediate on their behalf because of the foolishness of their parents. This lack of sustenance for the foolish person’s children is repeated by Eliphaz as he continues his discourse in 5:5, noting that those who are hungry and thirsty do whatever it takes to snatch away the possessions of the foolish man from his children.
dialogues. Eliphaz interestingly does not directly respond to Job’s words regarding the רְשָׁעִים in 3:17, nor does he ever directly call Job a “lion.” Rather, he uses one side of the calculus of just retribution—the downfall of the wicked—to prove to Job that there is indeed divine justice. It is evident through the lion imagery that Eliphaz upholds the doctrine of just retribution, but it appears as though the connotation of the imagery is to rid Job of worry that the retribution of the wicked will fall upon him at this point. This is apparent as Eliphaz ends his first speech by addressing Job in the second person, reiterating the blessings that come upon the righteous (5:19-26). Eliphaz assures Job of God’s justice through the lion imagery but concludes his speech reassuring Job of his eventual restoration. Thus, the conversation concerning the fate of the wicked is ironically broached through a word of encouragement to Job.

2.4 “Crushed Hope, Ruined Households, Restored Happiness”: Bildad—8:8-22

The conversational thread regarding human fate is subsequently taken up by Bildad. Up to this point, Bildad is only known by name (2:11), but he quickly shares his opinion using rhetoric brimming with metaphors intended to illustrate the fates of the wicked and the righteous. Bildad begins his discourse by reminding Job through a rhetorical question that it is against God’s character to pervert righteousness (צֶדֶק יְהוָה [v. 3]). Bildad uses Job’s children as a criterion to establish this proposed truth in stating, “Since your children sinned, he (God) delivered them over by the hand of their transgression (v. 4).” Hence, according to Bildad, Job’s children were

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175 Wilson, Job, 73, Janzen, Job, 88-89. Job later responds and asserts that God has indeed wronged him (עִוְּתָׁנִי [19:6]).
176 Though the sentence begins with the particle אִם “if,” the context of the dialogues indicates that Bildad is not communicating in a hypothetical manner. See Habel, Job, 169, Chines, Job 1-20, 198, Wilson, Job, 73. Longman suggests that there is no particular warrant for this understanding and that Bildad is not being utterly cruel in his statement. Longman, Job, 153, n. 1, 156. However, the context examined below indicates that it is quite possible Bildad was indeed speaking callously.
177 Understanding the phrase בְי ד to mean “through” or “because of.” For explanation of Ugaritic (byd) and Akkadian (ina qāti) as cognates, see Seow, Job 1-21, 528.
punished for their impiety. Job is not experiencing the same fate of his children, but, rather, suffering because of the loss of his children. If Job were to seek God, and remain pure and upright, then the Almighty would have mercy upon him and restore the habitation of his righteousness. Job would go from rags back to riches (vv. 5-7), unlike the miscreant (v. 13).

2.4.1 Traditional Wisdom as a Literary Technique—8:8-10

Bildad’s reference to just retribution commences by appealing to ancient tradition and encouraging Job to consider the findings of previous generations regarding justice. The logic here is that it is not good enough to rely on individual subjective experience, but, rather, the authority of tradition and communal memory are better mediums of truth. Bildad asserts that Job and his friends are but novices in comparison to the wisdom they can learn from those who have come before them (vv. 8-10).

2.4.1.1 Traditional Wisdom in the Song of Moses

By drawing upon ancient wisdom, Bildad employs a familiar rhetorical technique that appears on several more occasions throughout Job, as well as in the Bible. An example of this can be found in the Song of Moses, which is strikingly similar to Bildad’s appeal to tradition in vv. 8-10. In Deut 32:7 Moses is depicted as encouraging the Israelites to depend upon traditional wisdom by commanding:

“Remember the days of old. Consider the years of past generations. Ask your father, and he will tell you—your elders and they will instruct you.”

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179 Ibid., 520.
181 The second sentence of this translation is adopted from Greenstein, “Parody as a Challenge,” 72.
The rhetorical similarities are conspicuous between Deut 32:7 and Job 8:8-10. Bildad, like Moses, commands inquiring of the previous generations (כִּי-שְאֵלִים לְדוֹר רִישוֹן), emphasizes the importance of the ancestors (אֲבוֹתָם), and is confident that the seeker will receive valuable information from them (ךְָיֹאמְרֻלָּה-לָם וְיוֹרוֹךָ-לֹא). Bildad not only shares this view with Moses, but traditional wisdom turns out to be a point of agreement among all of Job’s companions.

2.4.1.2 Traditional Wisdom in the Ancient Near East

The appeal to ancient wisdom is also apparent in extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern literature. It is particularly evident in those compositions in which younger people are expected to heed the instruction of their forefathers. For example, the proverbs section of Šuruppak is prefaced with the following introduction:

In those days, in those far remote days;
In those nights, in those faraway nights;
In those years, in those far remote years;
In those days, the intelligent one, the one of elaborate words, the wise one, who lived in the country;
The man from Šuruppak, the intelligent one, the one of elaborate words, the wise one, who lived in the country;
The man from Šuruppak, gave instructions to his son…
Lines 1-6

This appeal to ancient wisdom is apparent in reference to the apkallū—the legendary divine sages who possessed superb wisdom and whose legend goes back as far as the 3rd millennium B.C.E. Leo Perdue notes that, “(i)n Mesopotamian mythical and sapiential sources, there are scattered references to the seven apkallu’s, ancient sages from hoary antiquity who were paired…

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182 Greenstein contends that Job makes use of Deut 32:7 to form the appeal to ancient tradition in Job 8:8-10. According to Greenstein, the poet of Job intentionally adapts lines from Deuteronomy 32 here and in other sections of Job, and uses this classic teaching in order to parody the concept of ancient wisdom. The goal of the parody is to demonstrate that traditional wisdom is ineffective in this situation, and suggest it is best to gain understanding through one’s experience. Ibid., 66-67, 72. Job plainly argues that experience is a better foundation for understanding his circumstances in chapter 21. See section 6.4.

183 Alster, Wisdom of Ancient Sumer, 56-57.

184 DDD, 72-74.
with seven legendary kings. Apparently famous counselors, they ordered society with their instructions, transmitted to humankind technology and art... and angered the gods by some form of now largely forgotten rebellion. Thus the tradition was suppressed, with only the ‘Myth of Adapa’ continuing to be well known.“

Furthermore, scribes in the ancient Near East sought to identify their compositions with early figures so as to make their wisdom more authoritative. Wisdom in the ancient Near East was closely related to possessing primeval knowledge which was considered privileged. For this reason, it was common that scribes would identify with the lineage of antediluvian characters because in doing so, they depicted themselves as being extremely wise—even wiser than kings who did not share the same descent.

Respect for authorship and tradition took a more tangible form later in Mesopotamian history when prominent urban families began to wear patronyms which consisted of real or imaginary ancestors—some of whom were renowned sages. Beaulieu states that, “(i)n the late periods of Mesopotamian civilization the social and intellectual context in which wisdom literature flourished changed substantially. Scribes, scholars, and royal advisors gained an influential place at court and invented traditions that put them on a par with the king in the intellectual and religious

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186 Beaulieu notes that “(a)ll the works listed in the Catalogue of Texts and Authors, when not ascribed to a god or a mythical being, are attributed to a famous exorcist, lamentation singer or diviner.” Beaulieu, "Social and Intellectual Setting " 15.


188 Beaulieu, "Social and Intellectual Setting " 15-16.
leadership of their culture..."189 This may be why kings, in particular Assurbanipal, claimed to have mastered writing.190 Scholars who were able to write were thought to have possessed wisdom. These scribes, who designedly traced their lineage, and thus knowledge, back to prehistoric times, were those who were responsible for authoring a portion of ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature. This is the literature that raised the same philosophical issues apparent in Hebrew wisdom literature—namely, the book of Job.

As a result, it is not surprising that this same type of appeal to ancient tradition would appear throughout the dialogues of Job as the poet draws upon a rhetorical technique that portrays Job’s friends steeped in the common theologies of their day. Accordingly, when Job’s companions appeal to traditional wisdom, they in fact are adopting a technique that ancient scribes and scholars used in order to associate themselves with the level of wisdom of the antediluvian sages of the ancient Near East. According to Job’s friends, the further they could trace back their knowledge, the wiser they were, and the more authority they had to speak to Job’s situation.191

190 Beaulieu states that “(o)bession with lineage induced scholars to trace the origins of their knowledge further back in time, eventually to the mythical period before the flood. By appropriating antediluvian knowledge, expert scholars came into direct competition with the kings, who until the late periods were alone in openly claiming a privileged link to knowledge...the appropriation by scribes and scholars of an antediluvian wisdom formerly the privilege of kings led to the creation of a tradition of antediluvian sages...the learned classes projected back into mythical time their role as royal advisors...Scholars now claimed as much of a connection to the ultimate source of wisdom, the gods and primeval sages (apkallus), as the king himself.” Beaulieu, “Social and Intellectual Setting ” 15-16. Perdue traces a series of kings identifying with wisdom from Šarru-mûda of the 24th century B.C.E. through Nabonidus of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Perdue also notes in particular that Ashurbanipal claims to have learned divine wisdom (nêmequ), learned the craft of the sage (apkallû), and claimed to have been able to read antediluvian inscriptions. Perdue, "Scribes, Sages, and Seers," 29-30. Avigdor Hurowitz also makes light of Assurbanipal’s claim to wisdom and interestingly comments that Assurbanipal’s bragging lends insight into the extent of scribal curriculum by detailing the subjects of which he claims excellence. Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Tales of Two Sages—Towards an Image of the "Wise Man" in Akkadian Writings," in Scribes, Sages, and Seers: The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World (ed. Leo G. Perdue; Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2008), 65-66, 73.
191 This appeal to ancient wisdom in Mesopotamia was apparently coupled with the eudemonistic idea that one’s happiness was contingent upon their tendency towards proper action. This notion led to an a posteriori recourse to the gods upon experiencing some sort of misfortune in order to determine the personal fault. Succinctly stated, the Mesopotamians reasoned: “If I am in trouble, it is because I am punished. If I am punished, it is because I must have forgotten some obligation or have violated some divine prohibition.” Bottéro, Mesopotamia, 187-88, quotation from p. 188.
2.4.2 “Malnourished Plants”—Job 8:11-14 and Jeremiah 17:5-8

In v. 11, Bildad begins denouncing those who are hopeless “forgetters of God” ([v.13]) metaphorically describing the destiny and the consequences which befall them. Bildad asks two rhetorical questions about the godless (חָׁנֵף) using botanic imagery to demonstrate that as plants cannot flourish where there is no sustenance (v. 11-12), so people who forget God will shrivel before their time and ultimately perish. By using this metaphor, and by appealing to traditional wisdom (vv. 8-10), Bildad defends the opinion that those who do not honor God meet a dire fate in due time.

Bildad’s usage of the metaphor of the weak plant to back the theory of just retribution is substantiated by the imagery of the wicked as a malnourished feeble plant elsewhere in the Bible. Notably, Jer 17:5-8 contrasts the man whose heart turns away from the Lord (מִן יְהוָׁה יָּסוּר לִבוֹ) with the blessed man who trusts in the Lord (בָּרוּך ה גֶּבֶר אֲשֶּר יִבְט ח ב יהוָׁה). The ungodly man is likened to a shrub which dwells in the dry, uninhabited, salty, desert and will never see goodness as long as he continues to turn from the Lord (vv. 5-6).

The “forgetters of God” in v. 13 bring to mind other instances in which the Israelites are commanded not to forget God (i.e., Deut 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7). Referring to people by this idiom suggests that they have disrupted their relationship with God and are therefore given over to those things that are not honoring to God—thereby, wicked. See Seow, Job 1-21, 520-21.

Some commentators recommend reading °א חֲרִית “end” here as opposed to the MT’s rendering of °אָׁרְחוֹת “paths.” This reading is substantiated by the Old Greek’s reading of τὰ ἐσχάτα as well as the argument that the emendation might better fit the context of the this section which deals with the fate of those who disdain God. See comments in Dhorme, Job, 119, and Pope, Job, 65-66. Clines on the other hand, does not accept the proposed emendation and suggests that °אָׁרְחוֹת is used in v. 13 to signify “tracks of fate” or “destiny” (Cf. the usage of °דֶרֶך in Is 40:27 and Ps 37:5). See Clines, Job 1-20, 199, as well as, Habel, Job, 177, Wilson, Job, 78-79. Additionally, the related Akkadian term °�不相信 is used to be associated with one’s fate. AHwv, 1420. See also Seow, Job 1-21, 533. Thus, there is no need for emendation here as the word °אָׁרְחוֹת can be used to suggest someone’s journey which eventually leads to their fate.

Hartley notes that Hebrew words for the papyrus and the reed are words that are not indigenous to Israel. The word for reed (אָח) has parallels in both Ugaritic (אָח) as well as Egyptian (3h or 3h), while °ָּכָּלָּה is paralleled in Egyptian (qm3). This observation lends further credence to the notion that the author of Job was familiar with the peculiarities of other people groups—notably, in this case, botany. Hartley, Job, 160, n. 9.

195 Ibid., 34.

196 Cf. Isa 1:28, 30 in which the rebels and the sinners (פֶּשֶׁע הָרָעָה [v. 28]) are likened to a tree with faded leaves (ָׁכֶחָׁצִיר מְהֵרָׁה יִמָּלוּ וּכְיֶרֶק דֶשֶּׁא יִבוֹלוּן) and a waterless garden (וּכְג נָּה אֲשֶּר-מ יִם אֵין לָה). See also the similar botanic imagery in Ps 37:2 where the psalmist states that evildoers wither like grass (כֶחָׁצִיר מְהֵרָׁה יִמָּלוּ וּכְיֶרֶק דֶשֶּׁא יִבוֹלוּן) as well as 37:35-36 where the wicked man initially flourishes but quickly passes away (רָשָׁע עָׁרִיץ וּמִתְעָרֶה כְּאֶזְרָׁח רֶעֶן וְיָעַר וְהִנֵּה אֵינֶנּוּ). There is also
is likened to a tree with healthy roots extending towards its source of life—water. This tree is constantly plush, perpetually bears fruit, and though heat may come, it is never worried about drought.

The metaphor of the malnourished plant in Jer 17:5-8 sheds light on Bildad’s usage of malnourished plants to depict the passing away of the wicked. Not only do the godless perish, but their hope—in the sense of continuity—crumbles along with them (תָּֽקַוּתְהָֽיָּהָֽהָֽאָֽבִֽדּוֹתָֽו [v. 13]). Through Bildad commenting that the godless have no hope, he alludes to Job’s previous reference to his own unfulfilled hope (6:8), and responds by stating that crushed hope is indeed a punishment for the wicked. The impious are hopeless because they have nothing tangible to depend upon. The godless lifestyle is insubstantial. It is as weak as a spider’s house ([i.e. spider’s web, v. 14] נְקוּיָּה בָּלָֽא גּוֹפָֽה).

2.4.3 “Ungodly, Unwise, and Unsteady House”—8:15, 22

As a continuation of this imagery, Bildad juxtaposes a literal statement to complete the stark contrast between the lifestyles of the righteous and the wicked:

| "He leans on his house and it does not stay upright, He takes hold of and it does not stand." | יִשְׁנַת עַל-בֵּיתוֹ וְלֹא יָּעֲמֹד יְחִיק בוֹ וְלֹא יָּקֻם |

Bildad points out that the house which the wicked thought was strong and secure is, in fact, so weak that it collapses merely from the weight of a human body. As the house falls, the impious person clutches hold of the house, whether to try to support himself or restore the fallen house, is not completely clear. Yet the outcome of the house is completely intelligible—it is easily

similar botanic imagery in Psalm 1 as well, yet Meir Weiss cogently argues that—unlike in Jeremiah 17—the imagery in Psalm 1 is not intended to depict human fate but rather, one’s nature. The Bible from Within: The Method of Total Interpretation (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 135-163.

197 Janzen, Job, 85.
198 Crenshaw, Reading Job, 72.
200 Seow, Job 1-21, 521-22.
weakened and topples. The wicked’s trust in their impious manner of living has caused the destruction of their houses. Though the imagery is understandable, this text still raises the question as to why Bildad would introduce house imagery relating to the consequences of not honoring God. Looking into how the house was used in relation to wisdom in ancient Near Eastern literature lends insight into how this metaphor may be used in Job.

Raymond C. Van Leeuwen argues that Mesopotamians understood proper house building to be rooted in the divine wisdom of creation. Human wisdom was grounded in divine wisdom, which established order, meaning, and life to the cosmos. Creation was, therefore, depicted as a universal “house” and its component parts—temples and traditional houses—corresponded as microcosms. Van Leeuwen then notes that, “Mesopotamian and Levantine societies not only organized their material world as house(hold)s but also developed cognitive environments in which the metaphorical domain or symbol expressed their particular understandings of the cosmosocial order comprising god(s) and humans.”

For example, in the Sumerian text “Enki and the World Order” Van Leeuwen notes that the term “house” is applied in the following realms: 1) The “house” is Enki’s actual temple, which is located in Eridu and was built by human workers. 2) The “house” refers to the “chthonic sweet waters, or Abzu, the source of all wisdom, the cosmic domain of Enki, whose waters fructify the earth.” 3) Lastly, the “house” refers to the entire cosmos.

Thus in ancient Mesopotamia, building a house properly was accomplished with wisdom because building was an issue of “divine command and agency and of human imitation of the divine wisdom in building.” This meant that literal temples, palaces, and ordinary homes were

202 Ibid., 69.
203 For example, a prayer of Esarhaddon directly states that skilled artificers, who build based on divine command, are conferred wisdom. Ibid., 74.
properly built under divine order.204 Yet also, in a metaphorical manner, the ancients understood house building to refer to wisdom, creation,205 and divine activity.206 These aspects of the building metaphor are noticeable in the Hebrew Bible in that wisdom is demonstrated by those who build themselves a “house.”207 Thus, the multidimensional allusion to the “house” in the Bible and in the ancient Near East depict an element of wisdom in multiple cultures.208 If a house was properly built—if it was strong, beautiful, and had good furnishings—the builder was wise for having followed divine guidance.209 Perdue corroborates the connection in the ancient Near East between the well-built house and wisdom and relates this concept to creation. Perdue notes that creation was perceived as a “well-constructed, elegant house, its arrangement and appearance one of beauty

204 Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos, Temple, House," 72. Divine order is present in temple building in the Bible as depicted in Ps 78:69; 127:1. See also Sima Milka, where the father’s last recorded injunction to his son is to build a house (line 118). Cohen, Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age, 96-97, 114.

205 See, for example, Gen. 2:22, where God “builds” the woman from the side of the human (יָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר אִשָּׂה). Van Leeuwen notes that the metaphor of creation as building was widespread which is notable through common Semitic root bny meaning “to build/to create” in Akkadian (banū “to create”), and Ugaritic (bny “to build”). "Cosmos, Temple, House," 73.

206 See for example Ps 104:5 (תֵּבִית חָכְמַת שְלֹמֹה וְה ב) which uses construction-related terminology to depict God as establishing the unmovable foundations of the earth. Thorkild Jacobsen also points out the effort of the Mesopotamians to secure the divine presence among them in the form of building temples. Noting that the Sumerian and Akkadian words for temple are both the same word for house (é and bītu, respectively), Jacobsen states that the words, “imply between the divine owner and his house not only all the emotional closeness of a human owner and his home, but beyond that a closeness of essence, of being, amounting more nearly to embodiment than habitation. In some sense the temple… was a representation of the form of the power that was meant to fill it.” Jacobsen, Treasures of Darkness, 15-16.

207 See, for example, 1 Kgs 10:4-8 which relates that the Queen of Sheba was impressed with Solomon upon seeing the “house” he had built (בְּבֵית מֹלֵכָה סֹלֵם). As is the case with Solomon, in the ancient Near East, human and divine kings and their counselors demonstrated their great wisdom by building big houses. Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos, Temple, House," 73-75.

208 For Sumerian culture see, for example, Šuruppak lines 202-03, which mentions the condition of the human heart when building a house. “A loving heart is edifying (lit., something that builds houses); (but) a hateful heart destroys houses (lit., is something that destroys houses).” Alster, Wisdom of Ancient Sumer, 91.

209 Leo Perdue also states, “(t)he building of a human house imitates this mythical metaphor, for humans reactuate divine creation in constructing a world for their habitation. Thus the activity of house-building is normally accompanied by rituals and celebrations designed to place the structure within the durable order of the cosmos. Through ritual and mythopoetic imagination, the architect and builders return to the primal origins of creation and draw from its power in planning and erecting the dwelling. The design and skill to accomplish the construction are due to the divine wisdom of which these artisans partake.” Perdue, Wisdom in Revolt, 39. See also Richard E. Averbeck, "Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method: Historiography and Temple Building," in Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations (eds. Mark W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 119-20. Averbeck points out the biblical parallels from the Gudea Cylinders, which highlight the “royal wisdom associated with temple building,” the divine call associated with temple building, and “the importance of constructing the temple according to every detail of a divinely revealed plan.” COS, 2:417-33.
and delight, and its laws those of a harmonious society regulated by authoritative decrees." Craftsmanship and artistic skill were likewise identified with wisdom in the Hebrew Bible. The ancient Near Eastern background establishing the connection of wisdom with properly building a house, helps clarify the metaphor that Bildad uses in Job 8:15. In its ancient Near Eastern context, the metaphor could be understood as a claim that the godless person loses one’s “house” for being unwise and not following divine instruction. Utilizing this metaphor in a multifaceted way, the ancients might have understood the collapsing of one’s “house” to refer to the impious person’s undoing in multiple realms. In the physical dimension, the “house” might refer to a literal human house and those things with which the house is filled—i.e., possessions. In Job 8, it appears as if Bildad is contrasting the wicked’s collapsing houses with the house/estate of Job, which will be restored to him if he will only be patient. Understood in a more metaphorical way, the destruction of the “house” could be understood as the elimination of one’s bloodline, family life, as well as, perhaps, the eradication of their worldly domain. Thus, according to Bildad, the wicked’s dependence upon their impious lifestyle ultimately proves to be insubstantial. In contrast to the feeble wicked, Bildad portrays the righteous as possessing deeply grounded roots.

210 Perdue, Wisdom in Revolt, 58.
211 See Exod 28:3; 31:3, 6. Ibid., 142, n. 2.
212 Cf. 8:20-22 which is essentially in agreement with Eliphaz’s prior statements in 5:17-26.
213 This meaning is unlikely in this context. Whereas בְּית “house” can mean “dynasty” (cf. 2 Sam 7:13 [וּלְיַכְבִּי תֹבְעַדְדְּבֶם] and refer to a household (by metonymy), it does not likely serve as a metaphor for descendants in the way that “seed,” (שָׂרְעָה) “root,” (ﬠַרְעָת) “fruit” (פְּרִי) do.
214 Foster notes that a common motif in Mesopotamian compositions points to the house being “the vulnerable center of family life, sometimes the setting for heights of human happiness or depths of human misery. Threats, attacks, or intrusions were most keenly felt at home and were anxiously warded off.” Benjamin R. Foster, Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature (3d ed.; Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005), 28-29.
215 See for example Prov 12:7 (וּבֵית צדִיקים יעֲדָה וְאֵין הָפָךְ).
2.4.4 “Well-Watered and Wicked?”—8:16-19

Though it is apparent that the theme of vv. 11-15 is Bildad’s assessment of the dreadful fate of the impious, the subject of the following section is not as easy to decipher. As Bildad continues in his discourse, there is an abrupt change in tone from the malnourished feeble plant (v. 11) to something moist (יהלום) in the presence of the sun, suggesting that the plant is well-nourished. This plant develops healthy shoots which spread out over a garden (v. 16). This imagery of a plant being well-fed with healthy shoots is apparently set in contrast with the withering plants of vv. 11-12, which represent the godless (v. 13). Likewise, this imagery matches the allusions to the righteous man in Jer 17:8. Hence, it appears that v. 16 depicts a change of tone, and with this, a change of subject.²¹⁶

The most challenging part of this passage lies in the interpretation of the difficult verses 17-19. Whereas one would expect the healthy plant’s roots to extend towards water, as is explicitly stated in Jer 17:8, this plant’s roots seemingly entangle themselves upon a pile of stones (إجراء נרות ישובו [v. 17]). Verse 18 appears to indicate that if the moist plant is uprooted from its place and it (i.e. the place) disowns the plant saying, “I do not recognize you” (v. 18), the moist plant nevertheless remains productive because the roots can grow anywhere it is planted—even out of dust (העבר את הארץ יצמחו [v. 19]). Despite the difficulties, an image emerges in vv. 16-19 that contrasts with the metaphors presented in vv. 11-15. Whereas the wicked’s way of life leads them to a feeble existence which ultimately collapses, the righteous are depicted as a strong plant that continuously regenerates in new ground regardless of where it is moved. Seow explains, “One may understand the point, therefore, to be the tenacity of such a plant in the face of obstacles, perhaps

²¹⁶ As already clearly seen by Saadiah Gaon. See Saadiah Ben Joseph Al-Fayyūmī, The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job (trans. L. E. Goodman. Yale Judaica Series 25. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 216-20. Janzen notes that vv. 16-19 describe the person with hope but that this hope has been frequently obscured by those translations of v. 19 which presuppose that vv. 16-19 continue to describe the godless. Job, 85-86. See also Habel, Job, 177.
a metaphor for faithful patience in the face of hardship. As a moist plant is able to survive even in a hostile environment, so a truly pious person will survive despite trials and tribulations. Indeed, it will thrive even amid a hostile environment.”

2.4.5 Assurance of Retribution and Restoration—8:20-22

Bildad concludes his argument by once again affirming the justice of God through appealing to the doctrine of just retribution. Bildad’s reference to God not rejecting the person of integrity (Tam [v. 20]) brings to mind the descriptions of Job’s character mentioned in the prologue, where he is referred to as a “blameless and upright man” (1:1, 8; 2:3). This characteristic was initially reiterated by Eliphaz in his warning to Job to hold fast to his characteristic piety (4:6). Bildad advances this line of reasoning by informing Job that God does not reject a blameless person, nor does God serve as an enabler to evildoers (v. 20). Bildad’s reminds Job that God would still grant Job abundant joy (v. 21), and that those who hate him will suffer the consequences of the wicked by bearing shame upon their households being utterly destroyed (v. 22). Bildad, like Eliphaz, encourages Job to be patient and not to slip into impiety. Job’s rhetoric in chapter 9, however, challenges his friends’ patience with him.

2.5 “The Whimsical God”—Job 9:20-24

In chapter 9, Job turns to legal jargon which conjures a hypothetical courtroom appearance that Job wants with God (vv. 2-4, 15). As Job formulates this legal response, he concedes defeat before the trial has even started, admitting that no one has ever challenged God and won. God is

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217 Seow, Job 1-21, 523.
218 There is no need for the emendation of יָש to יָש as suggested by BHS because יָש can take on the sense of יָש as depicted in 1:18. Hakham Job, 67.
219 Zophar’s subsequent appeal (11:18-19 [treated below in section 2.7.2]) is based upon the same premise. See Greenstein, "Parody as a Challenge," 74.
too wise. God is too powerful. It is impossible to resist God and succeed. In fact, no one has ever truly taken up a defensible case against God.\footnote{As Seow notes, nowhere else in the Bible does a human being take up a ריב with God. Seow, \textit{Job 1-21}, 544.}

As an explanation of why it is impossible to defeat God in anything, Job mentions God’s sovereignty over creation (vv. 5-10). God’s power is demonstrated in the ability to move mountains (v. 5), shake the earth (v. 6), and especially, to authoritatively speak to creation (v. 7). God spreads out the heavens, treads upon the sea (v. 8), and is explicitly called the creator of the constellations and other “wonderful things” (vv. 9-10). Job’s proclamation in v. 10 (עֹשֶה גְדֹלוֹת עַד אֵין חֵקֶר וְנִפְלָׁאוֹת עַד אֵין מִסְפָּר) sarcastically quotes Eliphaz, who in 5:9 uses identical phrases to proclaim the wondrous deeds of God (לעתה גְדוֹלָה וְאֵין חֵקֶר כַּמְפָלָאוֹת וְאֵין מִסְפָּר). Job parodies Eliphaz’s statements to assert that the “wonderful things” of creator God are actually troublesome deeds.\footnote{Habel, \textit{Job}, 50, 188.}\footnote{Longman, \textit{Job}, 170.}

These allusions bring to mind the creative act of Genesis 1-2, where God not only speaks things into existence (e.g., Gen 1:3), but also addresses existing things which obey God (e.g., Gen 1:6).\footnote{For a comprehensive discussion on models of creation in Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, in the light of ancient Near Eastern creation stories, see Adiel Cohen, “Creation Traditions in Psalms, Proverbs and Job in the Light of Creation Models from the Ancient Near East and from Genesis” (Ph.D. diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2011). Cohen treats every applicable passage from the three biblical books in this passage.}

In God creating and commanding creation through words, God’s complete power is established over creation, as well as the created order.\footnote{223} Nevertheless, whereas the creation narrative relates to the productive side of God’s creation, Job harps exclusively on negative actions—overturning the earth and hindering the stars from shining. Thus for Job, God’s creation demonstrates that God is more about power and its (ab)uses than order and justice.
2.5.1 The Destruction of the Blameless with the Guilty in Job and the Ancient Near East—vv. 20-24

Just as Job asserts that God misuses power over creation, Job also contends that God is abusing authority in his situation. Thus, Job reasons in vv. 20-24 that God afflicts Job simply because God possesses the capacity to do so. This idea of the divine being completely whimsical in judgment is problematic in ancient Near Eastern literature. For the most part, other “pious sufferers” admitted to some type of guilt, justifying, at least in part, their god(s) in permitting their suffering.

Take, for example, the sufferer in *Ludlul*, who initially claims not to know why he is suffering, but perceives that his god (Marduk) is chastening him as if he did not properly worship:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ayyīte epšēti šanāti mātitan</th>
<th>What strange conditions everywhere! I looked behind me, harassment and trouble! Like one who had not made libations for his god, and did not invoke his goddess with a food offering, who did not engage in prostration, was not seen bowing down, from whose mouth prayers and supplications have ceased, who abandoned the day of his god, disregarded his festival...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>āmurma arkat ridāti ippīru</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kī ša tamqîtum ana ili lā uktinnu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u ina mākalē ištari lā zakru</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appi lā enū šukenni lā amru</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ina pišu ipparkū suppē teslîti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ibuṭlu ūm ili išētu eššešī</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nīš ilišu kabti qallîš izkurû anâku amšal</td>
<td>Who invoked the solemn oath of his god in vain, that was who I was like.”²²⁴ II:10-16, 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ludlul* provides especially valuable insight into Job because the protagonist complains about divine injustice in a comparable manner to Job. Additionally, just as in Job, the sufferer in *Ludlul* suggests that those who do not honor the divine should suffer the consequences that the pious sufferer in fact endures. The protagonist is in an unsettling situation in that he experiences trouble but is confident that he has been attentive to those things required by his god Marduk:

The inconsistency between the sufferer who claims to be righteous, and his experience, which he likens to the punishment of those who do not honor the gods, leads to one of the main points of *Ludlul*—how to discern what is right and wrong to the gods. Job also struggles through inexplicable divine activity and concludes that, since there is no difference in the worldly outcome between the righteous and the wicked, there is uniformity in the afterlife (v. 22). Job contends that he has every reason to draw this conclusion, being blameless and suffering as if he were wicked. Job does not know what wrong he has done and he does not know what he is supposed to do, and so he continues to deliberate his situation, eventually concluding that God even mocks the innocent in their despair (v. 23). The only reason that Job would undergo the trials allotted to the wicked is because God has imputed guilt to him, observed his anguish, and ridiculed him. The sufferer of *Ludlul* also straightforwardly accuses Marduk of imputing guilt to him:

| aḫsusma ramānī suppē u teslīti | In fact, I was attentive to prayers and supplications… II:23 |

| iqabbīma gillata ušrašši | He speaks and imputes guilt… I:23 |

However, the protagonist of *Ludlul*, in contrast to Job, apparently did not worship the divine properly, and consequently admits to some type of wrongdoing against Marduk. In praising Marduk for alleviating him of his hardship the sufferer states:

| egātīya ušābil šāra | He causes the wind to carry off my acts of negligence… III:61 |

In contrast to other pious sufferers from the ancient Near East, Job finds no justification for the type of suffering he endures—especially in his companions’ just retribution theology.

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225 Ibid., 19, 35.
226 See, for example, II:33-38, especially line 36 which states “Who can learn the plan of the gods in the heavens.” Ibid., 35. Also cf. Karel van der Toorn, “Theodicy in Akkadian Literature,” in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (eds. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 79.
227 This verse will be treated more thoroughly below in section 2.5.3.
229 Ibid., 24, 39.
Therefore, he directly accuses God of being unfair. Interestingly, it is Job’s integrity that forces him to conclude that God is prone to unpredictable changes in judgment. Job’s persistence in claiming his innocence prohibits him from fully accepting the dogma his friends ardently defend for his situation. Yet unlike his friends, who assume that the act and consequence pattern is at work in the world, Job is compelled to repeatedly declare that he is innocent (9:15, 20), and therefore, this pattern cannot be applicable to his situation.

Thus Job, knowing that he is innocent of the types of sin that would produce the consequences he experiences according to the just retribution paradigm, is forced to conclude that God is a criminal. Job’s integrity compels him to either falsely indict himself of the type of grave sin that would be deserving of the type of punishment he receives, or to allege that God utterly disregards justice and imputes wickedness to him. Job chooses the latter option, thereby providing Bildad with the answer to his rhetorical questions of 8:3. As Andersen states, Job “cannot, without dishonesty, parade a fictitious depravity for the sake of theological theory.”

2.5.2 Job’s Righteousness—vv. 20-21

Job’s approach to challenging the justice of God is by focusing on the fate of human beings. In order for there to be any challenge to God’s justice, Job must initially establish himself as being

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230 Though the particle אִם in v. 15 can be used to express conditionality (i.e. צָׁדָּק אִם, “If I were innocent”), it is more likely that this it is being used here in a concessive manner—that is, “though I am innocent.” GKC §160.a. This is the same idea as v. 20 which is treated in more detail below.


232 Though the particle אִם in v. 15 can be used to express conditionality (i.e. צָׁדָּק אִם, “If I were innocent”), it is more likely that this it is being used here in a concessive manner—that is, “though I am innocent.” GKC §160.a. This is the same idea as v. 20 which is treated in more detail below.

233 Crenshaw, Reading Job, 73; Hartley, Job, 49.

234 Andersen, Job, 160.
righteous. Job is identified by the narrator (1:1), God (1:8, 2:3), and identifies (9:20, 21, 22) as “blameless” (תָּם).

Eliphaz apparently agrees that Job was a pious man before his trials (4:4).

Bildad too implies Job’s pious character. When encouraging Job to stray from falling into impiety, Bildad reminds Job that God does not reject the blameless (הֶן אֵל לֹא יִמְא ס תָּם [8:20]). Job is apparently desperate to accept this theological belief. In fact, Job’s desire to accept this principle is demonstrated through an identity crisis through which he no longer recognizes himself—an innocent person suffering as though he were wicked. Job knows he is blameless (e.g. אֶצְדָּק אִם [v. 20], תָּם אָׁנִי [v. 21]) yet suffering as if he were not, which causes him to reject any semblance of a just God and consequently to reject his own life (תָּם וְרָׁשָׁע [v. 21]). As Norman Habel says, “Job is intent on vindicating his own integrity at the expense of his divine antagonist.”

2.5.3 Wicked vs. Righteous: Identical Outcomes—vv. 22-23

Job is convinced that his integrity can be vindicated by provoking God to trial. In an attempt to do so, Job brazenly proclaims the injustice of God’s judgment by exclaiming:

“It is all the same! Therefore I say, ‘He destroys the innocent with the wicked.’”

Since Job is suffering beyond what he deserves, he is forced to conclude that one’s fate in life is not contingent upon one’s righteousness, and, therefore, neither is one’s fate in death. Job previously implied the belief of all eventually arriving in the same place upon death when

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235 This is contrary to Dhorme, who states that Job’s phrase אֶד ע נ פְשִי (translated: “I do not know myself”) suggests that Job cannot affirm his innocence. Dhorme, Job, 139. Job’s repetition of his blamelessness in this pericope assuredly points to the belief in his innocence—though not perfection. Longman, Job, 164, n.7, 173.
236 Habel, Job, 194.
237 Ibid., 61.
238 The OG does not have this phrase and exhibits other major differences in this verse which are difficult to reconcile. The OG may potentially be correcting the different theology concerning the afterlife among Jewish people of the period in which it was translated. The belief in divine retribution seems to have developed and become especially prevalent in the Jewish community in the centuries leading to the Common Era. With this came the belief of true retribution coming in the afterlife. This would mean that Job’s subsequent complaint of all meeting the same fate would be theologically unorthodox and, hence, subject to removal. See Martin G. Abegg, Jr., “Retribution” in Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls (eds. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2:767-69.
commenting that if he were dead, he would dwell with the nobles (3:13-15). However, at this juncture, Job’s theology is more straightforward and strident. It is not just that the righteous and the wicked both die, but rather, God is the one responsible for the destruction of the wicked and the righteous alike, regardless of the nature of their character. These are the first comments that Job explicitly makes with respect to the fate of the wicked, and they demonstrate that his experience has led him to distinct conclusions from those of his friends—particularly Bildad who just reminded Job that God does not pervert justice, embraces the blameless, and rejects the wicked (8:3, 20).239

Though Job’s theological conclusion concerning the identical fate of the wicked and the righteous is distinct from that of his companions, it is not completely foreign within the context of ancient Near Eastern literature. In Mesopotamia it was commonly believed that the last “sleep” was the identical outcome for all people. Jean Bottéro notes that to ancient Mesopotamians “death was not nothingness, a notion that was far too unimaginable...for the ancient Mesopotamians ever to have considered it. They found themselves simply before a cadaver, a body-and-nothing-else (pagru), fixed and appearing deeply asleep...”240 According to Bottéro, the Mesopotamians evidently believed that human-beings (awīlu) had a latent specter (eṭemmu) inside the awīlu which was predestined by Enki/Éa to be summoned to go to “the huge, black cave of Below: the symmetrical and antithetical opposite of On High, where it joined the countless multitude of other spectators [cf. Job 3:17-19], assembled there since the beginning of time and forever to lead a mournful existence, lethargic and sluggish forever after, an existence that was suggested by the rigid and pensive cadaver, as well as the fabulous image of Below of black night, of heavy silences,

239 Longman, Job, 173, Seow, Job 1-21, 549.
240 Italics his, bold mine. Bottéro, Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia, 106. Elsewhere Bottéro describes the Netherworld as “an immense, dark, silent, and sad cavern where all had to lead a gloomy and torpid existence forever.” Bottéro, Mesopotamia, 230]
and of endless, weighty sleep.” The eventual condition was considered to be the same for everyone in ancient Mesopotamia (“the last was the same sleep for everyone!”), in that, similar to Job’s perception of the realm of the dead in 3:17-19, all are granted a “more or less bearable or ‘fortunate’ condition.” Merits, morality, and good conduct while on earth played no role in one’s situation in the afterlife which was alike for all those who died.

Death as the fate of all people is humankind’s most basic observation. Along with this observation comes the understanding that death is not a desirable experience. Therefore, sages in the ancient Near East were compelled to deal with this issue. One of the ways to approach this matter was to directly state that all humans will die just as those who have died before. This is the approach of the sufferer’s companion in the *Theodicy*, who responds to the sufferer’s tragic loss of his mother and father by stating:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nāri ḫubur ebberi qabū ultu ulla</th>
<th>Our fathers have been given, but they shall go the path of death. “I shall cross the river Hubur,” it has been said since ancient time (lines 16-17).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The Sumerian composition *Nothing is of Value* likewise states:

Death is the share of man;  
The consequences of his fate, no man can escape them  
Lines 3-4

---

241 Bottéro contents that the Hebrew word *nefeš* exactly reflects the the Akkadian word *etemmu* and that after death, both the *etemmu* and the *nefeš* underwent the same scenario regarding their destinies. Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 106-07, 204, quotation from p. 107.

242 Ibid., 107

243 Ibid.

244 Though ancient Mesopotamians considered death to be the corresponding destiny for all human beings, there was still rank among the *etemmu* after death. Bottéro notes that, “in spite of their basic conviction that death and the afterlife were the great equalizers of human destinies, [the ancient Mesopotamians] maintained the idea that the level of existence of the *etemmu* was no more equal than the destiny of the former *awilu*, their fate in the Beyond depending more or less, not on their behavior, but on the conditions of life on Earth…” *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 109. See Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 241, for the derivation and relationship between these two terms. One can see the parallel with the Job 3:14-15, 19, in that Job still recognizes an earthly position in the realm of the dead.


246 This quotation exclusively appears in Alster’s recension C, which he suggests “more specifically centers on the mortality of humankind and, apparently, the unavoidable consequences of destiny.” Alster, *Wisdom of Ancient*
Furthermore, the Siduri the Tavern Keeper in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* blames the divine realm for humankind’s encounter with death because death was, in fact, made for humans. She strives to dissuade Gilgamesh from seeking eternal life by encouraging him to live hedonistically:  

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{inūma ilū ibnū awīlūtam} & \text{When the gods created mankind, for mankind} \\
\text{mūtam iškūna ana awīlūtim} & \text{they established death, eternal vigor, they} \\
\text{balātam ina qātišunu īṡabtū} & \text{kept for themselves. Tablet 10, Col. iii 3-5}^{248}
\end{array}
\]

Gilgamesh ultimately refuses, still grieving over his dead companion Enkidu, and Siduri the alewife eventually assists him in his search for Utanapishtim.  

Though a humorous composition, the *Dialogue of Pessimism* deals with serious philosophical issues. The servant in the *Dialogue of Pessimism* directly states, like Job, that

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248 Normalized Akkadian is mine—based upon A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 278-79, with minor adaptations. See also ANET, 90. The *Ballad of Early Rulers* states that the divine realm determines fates by drawing lots; “[The fates are] de[termined] by Ea, [The lots are drawn] according to the will of the god…” This composition proceeds to mention the renowned past leaders whom all have since departed. A version from Ugarit elaborates upon the fact that humans are unaware of their life-span and that knowledge of this exclusively resides with the divine (lines 25’, 27’ & 29’). Thus, Cohen remarks, “(i)n The Ballad of Early Rulers we learn that it is Ea who determines fates, allotting them to humankind. Since time immemorial, man’s days are numbered as one generation follows the next. Has anybody of our predecessors proved differently?” Yoram Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*, (SBLWAW 34; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 133, 137, quotation from 143. Alster observes, “(t)here was…no uniform answer as to how death became an inevitable condition for all mankind, but it clearly occupied the attention of the scribes.” Alster, *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer*, 332.


250 Greenstein outlines E. A. Speiser’s objections to the text being understood as somber and pessimistic and adds that the text is satirical and humorous. "Sages with a Sense of Humor: The Babylonian Dialogue between the Master and His Servant and the Book of Qoheleth," in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel* (ed. Richard J. Clifford; SBLSymS 36; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 59; see also Benjamin Foster, "Humor and Wit in the Ancient Near East," in *CANE*, 4:2459-69. This has not been the view of all scholars. Lambert, for example, suggests that this is a serious text written by an author who was going through emotional instability potentially caused by some form of depression. W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 141.

251 Lambert, *BWL*, 139. Greenstein states that, “(t)he text treats a clearly philosophical issue—What is good?—and reaches the conclusion that none of the enterprises that engage humanity has any real value.” "Sages with a Sense of Humor," 56.
both the wicked and the righteous meet the same fate. This is evident in the servant saying to his lord:

\[
\text{ilīma ina eli tillāni labīrūti itallak amur gulgullē ša arkūti u panūti ayyū bēl limuttimma ayyū bēl usāti}
\]

“Go up to the ancient ruin heaps and walk about. See the skulls of the high and low. Which is the malefactor, and which is the benefactor?”

The servant utters this comment in response to his master’s initial desire to perform some type of good deed for his country (line 30). Upon the master changing his mind (line 74), the slave also provides his most compelling reason for not committing this good deed. The slave’s reason is simple and coincides with conventional Mesopotamian thought concerning the afterlife—everyone meets the same fate and therefore, altruistic deeds are ultimately unprofitable (lines 76-78).

2.5.4 Problematic Issue for the Sages

Through repetition of the problematic theological issue that all are allotted the same fate, it becomes clear that ancient Near Eastern sages were deeply concerned with this matter.

Compositions from the ancient Near East propose, as does Job, that death is the eventual fate of all human beings regardless of their moral character.

Job’s comments in 9:22-23 however, bolster the theological implications of the uniformity of human fate. Job does not simply state that all die, or that the wicked perish. Rather, Job unswervingly accuses God for being responsible for bringing both the upright and the wicked to an early end. Job’s brazenness is what sets him apart from the ancient Near Eastern depictions of all meeting the same fate. He portrays God as a violent

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252 Normalized transliteration mine. Translation taken from, and transliteration based on, Lambert, BWL, 148-49. See also Perdue, Wisdom in Revolt, 104, n.1; Bottéro, Mesopotamia, 256, n. 7.
254 Righteous behavior in Mesopotamian religion was evidenced through a strong emphasis on maintaining the gods as opposed to a deep sense of affection for following one’s god. Bottéro suggests that a great revolution in Israelite religion was Moses’ replacement of “the purely material maintenance of the gods with the single and sole ‘liturgical’ obligation in life to obey a moral law, thereby truly rendering to God the only homage worthy of him.” Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia, 169.
god, who, acting on whims outside of any particular objective paradigm, is responsible for the destruction of the innocent and the wicked.

2.5.5 God is the “Unjust Justice” – v. 24

2.5.5.1 A Reward for the Wicked – רָשָע

At this point Job is compelled to denounce what proves to be his greatest theologically perplexing problem—the prosperity of the wicked. Job and his friends agree that the suffering he experiences is not the proper treatment of the righteous. What they will ultimately disagree over is whether Job should in the end be counted among the wicked.

In the first round of discourses, Eliphaz hints that the wicked would be punished (4:10-11) and Bildad directly states that the wicked would experience turmoil (8:1-22). Job may be hearing his companions accusing him of sin, thereby explaining his afflictions as punishments. However, Eliphaz takes pains not to accuse Job—coming up with other explanations (e.g., it is a warning; it is ordinary human suffering that will soon end)—and Bildad looks at the death of Job’s children and blames Job’s circumstances on the children, not on Job. Job spurns Eliphaz’s and Bildad’s explanations because they do not come to grips with the extent and profundity of his suffering.

Job initially suggests that all meet the same fate (vv. 22-23), but then proceeds to state that God derides the innocent and actually favors the wicked by compensating their misdeeds and obscuring justice. God’s active distortion of justice permits the wicked to become prosperous by inheriting the earth. Along with this notion of inheriting the earth comes the idea of having dominion over all things with God’s blessing. The fact that the wicked inherit the earth—perhaps meaning that they control the world’s order—is completely against traditional biblical

255 Longman, Job, 173.
256 De la Fuente, “Prosperidad del Malvado,” 609.
257 This is a point to which Eliphaz dissents and responds to in 15:17-19. See chapter 3.
wisdom, which asserts that those who honor God inherit the land while the wicked are cut off (cf. Ps 37:9). Thus through the phrase מְת לְעוֹת עָוָּל וָּאֲש בְּרָׁה, Job claims that his experience indicates that there are occasions when the just retribution model is not operative. At this point, Job’s conclusion as to why the wicked inherit the earth is because of God’s impaired judgment in carrying out justice. Simply stated—God is an unfair judge.

2.5.5.2 Job as Judge—9:24 & 29:7-25

The fact that Job formerly served as a judge is an issue that makes the prosperity of the wicked despicable to him. Job served as a judge in the city gate (29:7-25) and conducted himself in an upright manner concerning issues relating to justice. He was respected by people of all ages who admired the judgment he dispensed (vv. 8-11, 21-24). Job rescued the poor, helped orphans (v. 12), was a father to the needy (v. 16), made the widow merry (v. 13), assisted people with physical disabilities (v. 15), and served people as a type of sympathetic mentor (v. 25). After Job’s career as an honorable judge, he envisioned a long, prosperous life eventually ending at home (vv. 18-20).

There is one conspicuous claim in Job’s self-assessment as a judge in that he affirms his unswerving dedication to judging with integrity. Job claims to have properly judged the unrighteous by likening them to a fierce lion, stating, “I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and caused him to drop [his] prey (א שְלִיךְ טָׁרֶף וּמִשִנָּיו בְרָׁה מְת לְעוֹת עָוָּל וָּאֲש [29:17]).” Alluding to Eliphaz’s suggestion that the impious suffer the consequences of the wicked lion (4:10-11), Job declares that he was actually the righteous judge who hunted the wicked lions, breaking their fangs

258 Cf. also Ps 37:11, 34; Prov 2:21; 10.30.
259 Through the phrase מְת לְעוֹת עָוָּל וָּאֲש בְּרָׁה it is evident that Job alludes to the lion imagery utilized by Eliphaz in 4:10-11 to depict the wicked. The phrase מְת לְעוֹת עָוָּל is used in Joel 1:6, and indicates that the fangs refer to those of a lion (אֲשִׁיָּם is set in parallel to אֲשִׁיָּם in this passage). The word מְת לְעוֹת is also used in Prov. 30:14 without a direct reference to a lion to depict those who abuse the poor. Strawn, What is Stronger than a Lion?, 330-31, 339.
and depriving them of their sustenance. Job established righteousness by meting out justice to the wicked.

Job’s self-assessment aligns him with the criteria set out for judges in the Israelite tradition. Exodus 18:21 indicates that the judges of the land were supposed to capable, God-fearing, followers of truth, and haters of unjust gain. Job continuously asserts that he that he has fulfilled all of those requirements. Nevertheless, Job is denied the justice he formerly practiced as a judge—worst of all, by God. God is the one who perverts the rules necessary for the establishment of justice by impeding the discernment of judges (שופטים יכס פנים). James Crenshaw properly sums up Job’s comments in this section stating, “(i)t is as if Job answers Abraham’s question in Gen 18:25 with a resounding “No.” God does not act justly, and what is more, like the most loathsome of fools in the book of Proverbs, he mocks the helpless. Having abdicated his responsibility as guardian of justice, God hands over the earth into the power of the wicked and aids them in covering judges’ faces.”

2.5.5.3 “The Hypocritical God”—Job 9:24 and Psalm 82

As Job determines to pursue litigation, he is confronted with the reality that he opposes the head of the divine council. This ruler of the council, according to Job, is not only much stronger than he (v. 19) but is also a violent, ridiculing, perverter of justice (v. 21-23). Job contends that if God were to properly maintain the rules of jurisprudence, he would be declared innocent. Yet, God has become like one of the corrupt judges, deriving pleasure from punishing the righteous and the wicked alike.

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261 Ibid., 186.
262 This is a point which Job reiterates in 12:17.
263 Wilson, *Job*, 93; Crenshaw, *Reading Job*, 76.
The imagery of God, the head of the divine council, acting as an unjust judge brings to mind the accusations against the Canaanite deity El in Psalm 82. In Ugaritic tradition, El is depicted presiding over the assembly of gods at El’s mountain, which was the location from which decrees issued by El, were declared.265 The polemical nature of Psalm 82 emerges in v. 1, where God266 appears in the divine council of El and reprimands the judges/gods267 for failing to act responsibly and perverting justice (vv. 2-7).268 The following table is a comparison between the rebukes of the judges/gods of El by God, and the claims of God’s injustices by Job:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accusation</th>
<th>Psalm 82- El’s gods</th>
<th>Job 9:19-24- God of Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making unjust legal decisions</td>
<td>82:2a</td>
<td>9:22, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing partiality to the wicked</td>
<td>82:2b</td>
<td>9:24a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligence towards the helpless</td>
<td>82:3-4</td>
<td>9:23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding the Canaanite tradition regarding the council of El, along with reading Psalm 82 and Job 9 intertextually, it is possible to envision Job uttering a harsh invective against God. In Job 9, God causes corruption just as the gods do in Psalm 82 and thereby behaves like the very Canaanite deities YHWH rebukes in the Psalm. God administers (in)justice like the unsympathetic, partisan judges of the court of El. It is as a result of God’s behavior that the wicked prosper, inheriting the land. God shows favoritism towards the wicked like the judges of El. Read together, these passages depict a god who transgresses his own standards of proper conduct. The God of Job is a hypocrite!

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265 Ibid., 88-89. For an explanation of the assembly of the gods in Mesopotamia see Jacobsen, Treasures of Darkness, 86-91. Jacobsen relevantly outlines the two primary concerns of the assembly (pp. 86-87) in stating that, “it served as a court of law judging and passing sentence on wrongdoers, human or divine, and it was the authority that elected and deposed offices such as kings, human and divine.”

266 אֱלֹהִים but presumably to be understood as YHWH—the God of Israel. So, e.g., E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., The Assembly of the Gods (HSM 24; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 226-31.


268 Seow, Job 1-21, 548.
The indictments Job makes against God in 9:20-24 are the strongest allegations a mortal can bring against a divine judge. Job perceives God as a powerful bully who causes human suffering and then ridicules without compassion. God actively perverts justice making the fate of the wicked prosperous.

2.6 “God’s Hostilities to Job”—Job 10:2-3, 7-8, 16

This invective continues in Job 10, where we encounter Job weary and looking for answers. Since God remains silent, Job resigns himself to complaining and speaking of the bitterness of his soul (v. 1). His complaint alleges that God has crafted Job with the intent of destroying him. For Job, it makes no sense for God to bother to create a human and then to give him up—to destroy the work of his own hands, while looking favorably upon the wicked (vv. 2-3).

Job continues to cling to his innocence (v. 7), although it would seem futile because divine judgment is inevitable. The only conclusion that Job can muster concerning why he suffers the fate of a wicked person is that God is responsible for the entire situation. Job confronts God in v. 2, beseeching God to not declare him wicked (תן־רשענִי־א ל), and to disclose the reason that God contends with him. Job’s reaction to God declaring the innocent wicked is laced with bitter

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269 Crenshaw, Reading Job, 76.
270 There is a subtle distinction between the general Mesopotamian view of the divine plan and Job’s accusations of perverting justice in 9:20-24. The simple fact that Job is found complaining in this section reflects his expectation that God should act justly. That is, Job expects that God should treat him in a manner that reflects his piety. This seems, in a way, to be antithetical to the view of the Mesopotamians in which there was no prescribed ethical code according to which the gods were expected act. The destiny of humankind was completely contingent upon the will of the gods. When faced with the idea that this determined “destiny” for each individual would also make the respectable gods the agents of evil, and reasoning through which this meant in terms of divine justice, the Mesopotamians formulate an a-posteriori reasoning: “If I am suffering misfortune without clearly having wished or provoked it myself, it is like this because the gods have imposed it on me. And if they have decided to do so, I must have offended them by transgressing their wishes, by disobeying their commands—even without wanting to or without knowing it.” Bottéro, Mesopotamia, 196, 224, 227-28, quotation from p. 228. Italics his.
271 The phrase אֵין מִיָּדְךָ מ צִיל denotes imminent divine judgment. See e.g., Deut 32:39 and Isa 43:13. Wilson, Job, 103.
272 Longman, Job, 177; Mettinger, "God of Job," 45.
sarcasm. Job sarcastically asks God if God benefits (ךָהֲטוֹב לְ) from oppressing and despising the work of God’s hands (v. 3a). Even though God’s hands shaped Job (vv. 3 & 8a), and God meticulously formed Job (vv. 9-12), God is set to completely destroy him (v. 8b). God continuously renews hostilities against Job, increasing anger towards him, and bringing troops—a concrete image of God’s hostility—against him (v. 17).

In agreement with Job’s previously-mentioned desire to never have been born (3:1-19), this passage also calls into question the purpose of Job’s existence (vv. 18-19). At this point, however, Job loathes his life (v. 1) and, in his distress, becomes brasher in asserting the purpose of his existence: God formed Job to destroy him (vv. 8-9). There is nothing that Job can do to prevent this as God planned this suffering for Job in the divine heart (v. 13). Job’s hope is relegated to the possibility that he might obtain some comfort before departing into deep darkness (vv. 20-22).

Throughout all of this, Job notes again that God approvingly responds to the wicked (v. 3b). Traditional Israelite wisdom advises the pious not to enter the counsel of the wicked (ב עֲצ ת רְשָׁעִים, cf. Ps 1:1). Now, Job is accusing God of favoring this very counsel (ע ל עֲצ ת רְשָׁעִים הוֹפָּעְתָּ). Thus, God’s system is corrupted in God’s sanctioning the impious’ schemes. This injustice is portrayed in two specific images in this passage which depict Job suffering the consequences that one would expect to befall the wicked—namely, God swallowing Job, as well as God hunting Job like a fierce lion.

273 See also Ps 139:13.
274 Crenshaw, Reading Job, 78.
275 Concerning the translation of the wordךָהֲטוֹב לְ as “your hostilities,” see Greenstein, "Invention of Language," 340. Greenstein cogently argues that the poet of Job utilizes masculine plural nouns to convey an abstract concept. See examples on pp. 340-41. See also Greenstein, “Features of Language,” 92-93. In this case,ךָהֲטוֹב לְ is a Joban neologism that should be understood to mean “hostility” or “prosecution.”
276 Cf. 9:21.
277 Job expands upon his claim in chapter 21. See chapter 3 of this work.
2.6.1 God Swallows Job—10:8

In the Bible, the figurative usage of the verb בלע, usually in the piel “to cause to be swallowed,” is commonly used to depict a destructive act—“to destroy” or “to ruin.” This imagery appears in the prologue of Job where God reminds the Satan that he provoked God to “destroy him [Job] for no reason” (בללך חין). This imagery is shared by other biblical wisdom literature. For example, Prov 1:12 mentions the sinners who recruit people to incite violence against others and commit robbery by saying, “Let us swallow them alive like Sheol” (נבלעמ שיאלא),—intending to fill their houses with the victim’s plunder (1:13).

Similarly, the imagery of swallowing is associated with the concept of divine judgment. For instance, Isaiah explicitly depicts judgment through God permanently destroying Death by swallowing (בלע תמא ל払い [25:8]). Additionally, at the end of the episode detailing Korah’s rebellion (Num 16:30-32), the earth consumes Korah and those associated with his trespass (הלך הארץ ופתחת את פתחתיandro ואת-byterian, [v. 32]). In this passage, God is depicted as judging through the usually inanimate earth opening its mouth to swallow those who had rebelled. The opening up of the earth’s mouth coincides with the imagery of the Ugaritic deity Mot, whose mouth is the cavities in the earth and whose gullet is the channels (graves and other holes and cracks) leading down into the Netherworld. The Epic of Baal depicts swallowing as the method in which the Ugaritic god Mot destroys his prey.

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278 BDB, 118.
279 With regard to the identity of Sheol, Hans M. Barstad states, “There appears to be no textual support for the claim that personifications of Sheol in the Hebrew Bible reflect mythological material.” “Sheol.” DDD, 768. At bare minimum, however, this indeed appears to be a case in which Sheol is personified. See also, Hab 2:5.
280 Isa 5:14 also makes reference to Sheol swallowing, though without using the verb בלע, to depict judgment upon the impious. Sheol “widens her throat and opens her mouth without limit” (קרחותה שיאול נפתמה והפת פיות-חה). Mettinger, "God of Job," 43-44. Cf. also Ps 35:25, Isa 49:19, Lam 2:16, and Hab 1:13 where the verb בלע depicts a destructive action by the impious.
Knowing that Mot was perceived as the god who destroyed his victims through swallowing them puts the act of God in Isa 25:8 into perspective in its ancient Near Eastern context and helps illustrate how Job characterizes God. In Isaiah, God swallows Death in a divine act of judgment upon the chaotic force responsible for swallowing others. Death is swallowed and eliminated so that God might bring comfort to God’s people. In Job 10:8, Job accuses God doing the exact opposite—God causes chaos by deeming innocent creation wicked, creating injustice by favoring the wicked, and taking on the character of the destructive Ugaritic god Mot.283

2.6.2 God the Lion Hunts Job the Prey—10:14-16

Eliphaz first likens the wicked person to a lion and outlines the consequences that come upon those who do not honor God (4:10-11). In Job’s responses, he has repeatedly accused God of treating him as though he were a wicked person. In 10:14-16, Job once again repeats his innocence and alludes to Eliphaz’s usage of lion imagery to communicate the injustice being carried out upon him. Job brazenly asserts:

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283 Mettinger, "God of Job," 43-44. Leo Perdue notes, “(l)ike the insatiable Mot whose gullet swallows Baal, an image also descriptive of the voracious appetite of Sheol (Prov 1:12), God has turned to devour the creature of his own making.” Perdue, Wisdom in Revolt, 143-44, n. 1. See also Jonah 2:1-3, where the large fish takes Jonah to Sheol by means of swallowing him.
“If [my head] lifts up, like a lion you would hunt me—again, you will show your power against me.”

It is ambiguous whether the simile כ ש ח ל applies to God (as in, God is acting like a lion in hunting Job) or Job (as in Job is being hunted as if he were a lion). This uncertainty is further complicated by examining lion imagery in the Bible where it is used to depict the lion as a wicked person (cf. Ps 7:3, 10:9, 17:12, 91:13), as well as God in acts of judgment (cf. Hos 5:14; 13:7-8; Amos 3:4, 8; 5:19). Nevertheless, in the light of Job’s other discourses, the reference is apparently depicting God as the lion and Job the prey. Affirmation of God as the lion appear through the viciousness that Job attributes to God against him in 16:9 (א פוֹ טָׁר •יִנֵּרָם), and 16:12 (שהָּיִיתִי וּיְפַרְפַּרְנִי וּאָׁחַבְעָרְפְּנִי). Despite the ambiguous syntax, it is reasonable to understand Job claiming in v. 16 that if he were to simply demonstrate any semblance of respectability by lifting up his head, God the lion would hunt Job, displaying great power in this brutal act against him.

2.7 “The Eye of the Wicked Will Fail”: Zophar—11:20

2.7.1 God’s Immeasurable Wisdom—11:7-8

Zophar understands the rhetoric that Job uses to portray God as a way of circumventing his own culpability. Therefore, Zophar commences his initial discourse by accusing Job of being a wordy mocker who mistakenly believes his instruction is flawless. He wishes that God would

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284 For God being depicted as a lion in the Hebrew Bible, see Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion?*, 58-65.
285 Job seems to be talking about himself in 16a (see i.e., v. 15 רָׁש עְתִי, צָׁדָה, but the verb יִגְאֶה is in the third person. The closest antecedent is רֹאשִי for which the third person singular conjugation would be appropriate rendering the phrase “when it is high” referring to his head. Thus, it seems to be that Job is communicating that if his head were lifted up, God the lion would hunt him. For the conditionality of this phrase, see GKC §109h. See the phrase נָשָׁא רֹאש in Judg 8:28 and Ps 83:3 as an indicator of pride. Habel, *Job*, 200.
286 Seow, *Job 1-21*, 599.
287 Crenshaw pointedly observes that Job never, in fact, states that his teaching is flawless. *Reading Job*, 80.
speak up against Job and reveal to him the true secrets of wisdom. Zophar supposes that Job believes in his innocence but, based upon his circumstances, Zophar concludes that Job cannot be guiltless. Thus, he surmises that Job must have sinned but then was made to forget his trespass. Job’s inability to remember his sin is what makes his suffering seems like groundless punishment. (11:2-6).

At this point, Zophar asks Job several rhetorical questions with the intent of impressing upon Job that he has no right to question his circumstances. Job knows nothing of the profundity of God (v. 7), which is higher than the heavens and deeper than Sheol (v. 8). Here we see Zophar using a common ancient Near Eastern proverb, appearing in various forms in the Dialogue of Pessimism, Ludlul, The Babylonian Theodicy, The Ballad of Early Rulers, and Nothing is of Value, among other compositions to express the limits of human knowledge. Nili Samet comments:

In Job 11, Zophar seems to utilize this topos for purposes similar to those of classic Akkadian wisdom literature. God’s wisdom is declared to be higher than heaven, deeper than Sheol, longer than the earth and broader than the sea, and therefore Job cannot achieve it. Aside from the figurative use of the typically concrete components heaven, Sheol, earth and sea, Zofar (sic) does not seem to suggest any novelty; he basically agrees with the traditional view of the Mesopotamian wisdom literature, concluding that wisdom.

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288 This understanding of v. 6b (ךָנֶמֵעֲוֹלְךָ אֱלֹהִי שֶהָכִי) is based upon the verb יָשֶה related to יָשֵׁה II “to forget”—and in the hiphil “to cause to forget.” Cf. Job 39:17. BDB, 674. This is in contrast to many commentators who suggest יָשֶה is related to יָשַׁה I “to lend, become a creditor” (ibid.), and understand the phrase to mean that Job is suffering less than he deserves. See Habel, Job, 207; Wilson, Job; 114, Longman, Job, 187.

289 Comparable adages exist in recensions A (lines 5-7), and D (lines 1-20) as divided by Alster. Alster, Wisdom of Ancient Sumer, 270, 278-79.

290 Nili Samet, "The Tallest Man Cannot Reach Heaven; The Broadest Man Cannot Cover Earth; Reconsidering the Proverb and its Biblical Parallels," JHS 10 (2010): 2-10, quotation from p. 10. See already Frederick E. Greenspahn, “A Mesopotamian Proverb and Its Biblical Reverberations,” JAOS 114 (1994): 33-38. The wisdom-related idea of the incomprehensibility of exalted figures is also evident in Prov 25:3, where it is the king whose heart is inscrutable. See also the discussion in Alster, Wisdom of Ancient Sumer, 294-96, who points out potential reasons for the recurrence of these lines among the aforementioned texts.
In accordance with ancient Near Eastern thought, Zophar asserts that, only the divine can access true wisdom and, therefore, no one, especially Job, can turn God away from God’s purposes (v. 10). God’s wisdom is evident through God’s discernment in being able to perceive those who are wicked (v. 11). This assertion is in direct opposition to Job’s contention that God does not differentiate between the innocent and the wicked—or, if God does, God favors the wicked (cf. 9:20-24). The implicit suggestion is that Job should recognize and turn away from those things that are provoking God to treat him as a wicked person.

Yet Zophar does not initially focus on the fate of the wicked but, rather, emphasizes the good fortune that will come upon the righteous. In vv. 13-19, Zophar switches from speaking in the third person to the second person and directly emboldens Job to set his heart to God and to put away all evil (vv. 13-14) so that life’s circumstances would rapidly improve for him. Upon Job returning to God, he would regain his social standing (v. 15), forget all of his trouble (v. 16), and enjoy security, hope (v. 18), and respect (v. 19). Indeed Zophar’s remarks concerning the restoration of the righteous demonstrate that his conclusion matches those of his Eliphaz (5:19-25) and Bildad (8:20-22). If Job does not repent, however, he will suffer the consequences due to him and will be destroyed like the wicked.

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291 Regarding Mesopotamian religion Bottéro notes the tradition that “only the gods, masters of the universe, know and understand its progress; that only they are aware of the system that rules the universe; that only they are able to answer the innumerable and unsolvable questions that we ask about our universe.” Bottéro, Mesopotamia, 263.

292 Longman, Job, 188.
293 De la Fuente, "Prosperidad del Malvado," 606.
294 Janzen, Job, 99.
295 Greenstein, “Parody as a Challenge,” 74.
296 It is important to note that the restoration listed in vv. 15-19 is not listed in materialistic terms, but rather deals with the human psychological state. Longman, Job, 186, 190. This is important because psychological instability proves to be one of the illustrations that Eliphaz uses in his depiction of the consequences of the wicked (15:20-21, 24).
2.7.2 The Consequences for the Wicked—11:20

Despite the potential restoration Job might be able to enjoy, v. 20 states what Zophar believes to be the eventual end of the wicked person. Zophar’s assessment serves as a warning to Job so as not to continue to deny his blameworthiness. Communicated in typical retributive justice fashion, Zophar states:

“In the eyes of the wicked will fail. Escape will vanish from them. Their hope is chagrin.”

In contrast to the repentant person described in vv. 15-19, the consequence for the wicked, according to Zophar in v. 20, is three-fold. Initially, the eyes of the wicked will fail. The failing of the eyes (כָּלְתָה עֵינֵי) is a phrase that is used in the Bible to express a thwarted hope or longing for something. For example, this phrase is use in conjunction with longing for loved ones in Deut 28:32 (כָּלְתָה עֵינֶיךָ רֹאוֹת וְכָּלוֹת אֲלֵיהֶם), as well as the psalmist’s yearning for God in (כָּלוּ עֵינַי [Ps 69:4]). Thus, the wicked eventually find themselves in a perpetually desirous state, yearning for that which is dear to them. Secondly, there is no escape from this because judgment is sure to come. Lastly, when the judgment comes, all hope will be lost to utter chagrin. By encouraging Job to put away his iniquity (vv. 13-19), and distinguishing between the potential turnaround for Job and the dreadful fate of the wicked, Zophar strives to correct Job’s outlandish claims of 9:22 which suggest that God indeterminately slays both the blameless and the wicked.

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297 Based on the phrase “…and have vexed the soul of its owners” (וְנֶפֶשׁ בְּעָלֶיהֶם) in 31:39, it appears that פָּשׁ signifies extreme displeasure (i.e. chagrin).
298 Longman, Job, 190.
299 Ibid., 56-57.
2.8 Summary/Conclusion

Job’s friends came from afar, sat with him, wept, and were speechless for seven days. Eliphaz finally breaks the silence after Job curses the day of his birth in order to offer words of encouragement. Eliphaz’s main method of encouraging Job comes through lion imagery—a widely known image in the biblical and ancient Near Eastern literary traditions—which he uses to demonstrate the justice of God. God gives people what they ultimately deserve, according to Eliphaz. Just as the lion eventually receives its just retribution from God, so Job would be vindicated in the course of time. Job must simply be patient and not fall into impiety in order to eventually attain that which is due to him—his restoration.

Bildad makes an overt appeal to ancient wisdom at the beginning of his dialogue in order to establish the veracity of his subsequent claims. Like Eliphaz, Bildad’s conclusion regarding human fate is based upon the doctrine of just retribution. Unlike Eliphaz, however, Bildad points out that Job’s children are a prime object lesson for the doctrine of just retribution at work. They suffered the consequences of their wrongdoing, and though Job is forced to suffer their loss, he does not have to suffer the same fate.

In order to differentiate the pious from the wicked, Bildad uses well-known botanic imagery. Through this, Bildad resonates with other biblical passages (e.g., Jer 17:5-8), that the forgetters of God will wither, while the pious are firmly planted. God’s justice demands that God strengthen the blameless and reject the evildoer. If Job would only hold fast, he would see the day when the justice of God is meted out to the wicked—even to his enemies.

The first round of speeches ends with Zophar, who maintains that Job must admit his wrongdoing and turn back to God. To Zophar, Job’s suffering is a sort of “divine pedagogy” in
which he must learn humility.\textsuperscript{300} God’s wisdom is overwhelmingly more expansive than Job’s; therefore, Job must be quick to recognize his iniquity and not blame God. This is Job’s only avenue of restoration. If Job does not turn to God, Zophar suggests, he will suffer the unavoidable consequences of the wicked. Zophar’s ultimatum to either repent and be restored, or remain obstinate and suffer, fittingly comes as the final words of Job’s friends’ speeches in the first round, and foreshadows the harsher character of the second round of speeches.

Though Job’s friends perpetually address him in their speeches, Job’s analysis of his circumstances is not directly addressed to his friends. Job expresses his observations based upon his experience to God. After all, it is God who behaves like a perverter of justice and favors the wicked. Job cries out that God condemns him without just cause and abusively carries out the consequences of the wicked upon him. God destroys Job by “swallowing him”—which is imagery also related to the Ugaritic deity Mot. God is also depicted as a ferocious lion that devours Job, demonstrating the misusage of God’s brute power to abuse him.

In this manner Job candidly rebuffs his friends’ condolences with displeasure. The doctrine of just retribution is not applicable in Job’s case and therefore, promises of restoration are made in vain. Hence, the longer his companions’ harp on this doctrine, the more Job is forced to demonstrate how it is precisely this paradigm that points to God’s injustice because of his innocence. Job’s accusations concerning the character of God are understood by his companions, which is evident through the discourse in round two, where they intensify their defense of God’s just retribution based upon traditional wisdom, and ultimately include Job among the wicked.

\textsuperscript{300} Crenshaw, \textit{Reading Job}, 20.
3 “Unequivocal Reiteration”: Eliphaz in Job 15:17-35

As said above, Eliphaz is the most accommodating to Job in the first round of speeches and uses metaphorical language to reinforce divine justice and, hence, eventual restoration for Job (see my comments on 4:6-11). Yet now, Eliphaz bluntly confronts Job in his second speech alleging that Job has broken away from fearing God ([15:4]). As a result of this, Eliphaz proceeds to a protracted description of the consequences due to the wicked. In this portrayal, Eliphaz describes many of the same repercussions of impiety that he and/or his friends mention in the first cycle of speeches.

Eliphaz erupts into rhetorical questioning in vv. 7-9, asking Job if he were the first man ever born—even before the hills—and asking if he arrogates wisdom to himself. “Did you listen in on God’s council?” Eliphaz sarcastically inquires of Job, “What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not with us?” The answers to these questions are all clearly negative. Through this rhetoric, Eliphaz invokes and challenges Job’s claim to having wisdom comparable to that of his friends (12:3). Nevertheless, Job refrains from embracing traditional wisdom in his situation, regardless of how much both Bildad (8:8-10), and now Eliphaz (15:10,

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301 Based on the context, especially Job’s allegations against God in the previous round of speeches, it is reasonable to understand יִרְאָה to be an abbreviated form of יִרְאָה יָדֶיהָ as it is used in other wisdom literature (i.e. Prov 1:7, 29, 2:5, 9:10), or with another appellatives for God (i.e. יִרְאָה סּוֹדֶיהָ [Gen. 20:11], יִרְאָה שֶׁהָיָה שְׁדִי [Job 6:14], and יִרְאָה אֱלֹהִים [Job 28:28]).

302 Habel, Job, 248.

303 For example, in 9:20 Job proclaims that, though he is righteous, his own mouth makes him wicked (ָׁלִפְנֵי בָנָה תַּלְתֵּי). Eliphaz retorts and states that it is indeed Job’s mouth that condemns him and not anyone else’s (ָׁלִפְנֵי לְפִיחֵי פִי [15:6a]).

304 Eliphaz’s question to Job regarding his origins (ָׁלִפְנֵי בָנָה תַּלְתֵּי) brings to mind the rhetoric Lady Wisdom uses to describe her own ancient origins in Prov 8:25 (לִפְנֵי בָנָה תַּלְתֵּי). Longman, Job, 225. This recalls a major tenant of traditional wisdom—namely, the primordial character of genuine wisdom (cf. 8:8-10). See also Janzen, Job, 116, 120-21.

305 In the Bible, true prophets of God whose words contains authoritative wisdom are privy to the council of God (e.g., Micaiah in 1 Kgs 22:19; see also Jer 23:18-22), Janzen, Job, 116. God is depicted as revealing God’s council to those who are upright while those who turn aside from God are an abomination (כִּי תוֹעֲב תָּהֳלָךְ נָּלֹו [רְשִיעָה].) Job responds that he indeed was privy to this council in 29:4. Such councils were also common in the mythology of ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite cultures. Habel, Job, 253.

306 Wilson, Job, 162.
advocate for this position. Eliphaz perceives that Job is angry at God (v. 13) which provokes him in vv. 14-16 to reiterate to Job that no one can be pure or righteous (√מָּה-אֱנוֹש כִי-יִזְכֶה) regardless of how frequently Job attests to his integrity.

Yet before addressing the traditional description of the fate of the wicked, Eliphaz is compelled to deal with one of Job’s comments regarding God’s justice. In 9:24, Job complains that God favors the wicked through rewarding them with the land (√אֶרֶץ נִתְנָה בְי רָשָׁע) and control of what happens therein—instead of the supposed punishments his companions suggest the wicked should suffer. Eliphaz seizes the opportunity to rebuke Job for this remark, and informs Job that control of the land was exclusively given to the wise and venerable ancients (√לָׁהֶם לְב דָׁם נִתְנָה הָּאָרֶץ [v. 19a]), whose advice Job spurns. Only the wise forefathers were the guardians of pure tradition and could keep true doctrine intact. The forefathers lived peacefully because they were protected from invasion (√עָׁב ר זָׁר בְתוֹכָׁם-וְלֹא) and negative foreign influence. In this manner, Eliphaz answers Job’s claim of 9:24 that the wicked are the heirs of God’s blessing. The wicked are indeed not the recipients of God’s munificence, but, rather, the guardians of truth who are liberated from wayward influence are the genuine beneficiaries.

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307 See Ps 25:13, which indicates that the children of the God-fearer are those who will inherit the earth (√וֹוְז רְע יִיר ש אָׁרֶץ).  
308 This idea of living peacefully in the land as a result of no stranger passing through is best understood when read intertextually. In Joel 4:17, God states that Jerusalem will be in an ideal state when God resides there and no other foreigners will pass through (√וְזָׁרִים לֹא יִע בְרוּ-בָּה עוֹד). See also Nah 2:1, where Judah is promised never to be invaded by the wicked who are cut off from the wicked who are cut off from the wicked who are cut off.  
309 It appears that this same concept of peace through no foreign invasion is what is being depicted in Job 15:19b. Driver and Gray, Job, 1:137; Dhorme, Job, 215; Pope, Job, 116; Tur-Sinai, Job, 252; Habel, Job, 258.  
309 Hartley, Job, 251. It seems likely, whether this is a Transjordanian composition or not, that the point of this statement is that the ancients’ wisdom was unpolluted by foreign influence. That is, the foreigner in any culture would not have been able to negatively influence the pure and sagacious wisdom from antiquity (contra Longman, Job, 228, n. 12.).  
310 Seow, Job 1-21, 703. Note the repeated claim of the psalmists that only the righteous and blessed of the Lord enter into and inherit the land (Pss 37: 3, 9, 11, 22, 27, 29, 34; 74:9). See also the destiny of the mighty tyrant’s children who are not permitted to inherit the land in Isa 14:21, as well as Hosea’s claim that disobedient Israel will not remain in the Lord’s land (9:3).
3.1 The Demise of the Deranged Wicked—vv. 20-21, 24

3.1.1 Terror, Torment & Delusion

Now that traditional wisdom has been invoked, Eliphaz spends the remainder of his speech communicating what traditional wisdom teaches concerning just retribution upon the wicked while suggesting that these are the consequences that will befall Job if he does not turn back to God. Throughout his speech, Eliphaz is compelled to harshly respond to Job’s former insinuations that the wicked indeed prosper. Eliphaz does this by demonstrating ideological affinity with his friends’ retributive justice paradigm, and contends that though the wicked appear to prosper, in reality they live in a perpetual tempest in anticipation of their imminent doom. In addition to this, Eliphaz makes the corresponding assertion that the years of the ruthless are numbered, suggesting

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311 Wilson, Job, 167. Throughout Eliphaz’s speech concerning the general fate of the wicked, he consistently refers to the wicked in the collective third person masculine singular. Seow, Job 1-21, 697. When mentioning the specific imagery alluded to in 15:20-35, I will use the third person masculine singular, but when referring to the application of Eliphaz’s statement to the wicked in general, I will use the third person plural form, “wicked.”

312 Seow notes (contra Rowley) that, though Eliphaz does not directly accuse Job and uses the impersonal third person masculine singular to depict the wicked throughout this chapter, “it is difficult to believe that Eliphaz did not have Job in mind.” Seow, Job 1-21, 697.

313 Dhorme, Job, 215.

314 Dhorme suggests that מִתְחוֹלֵל is the hithpolel of חיל, and means “to torment one’s self.” Accordingly, the literal translation of this section is “all the days of the wicked man, he torments himself.” The meaning is clear in that the conscience of the wicked man is his greatest tormentor. He is never in peace. See the usage of the hitpalpal of חיל in Esth 4:4 meaning to be in “deep distress,” “to be grieved” or, as Dhorme says, “to shudder.” Ibid., 215-16. The word מִתְחוֹלֵל appears one other time in the same inflected form in Jer 23:19 in which a whirling storm serves as judgment upon the wicked. In Job 15:20 it seems that this reference intends to depict a metaphorical tempest from which the wicked cannot escape.

315 Rowley, Job, 111; Hartley, Job, 151. Driver and Gray state concerning vv. 21-24 that “(e)ven while the wicked seem to prosper they are in reality tormented by the expectation that misfortunes, such as are described in 21-24, will overtake them: such a theory—it is nothing more—helps to bolster up the orthodox dogma maintained by the friends that the wicked do not prosper: the apparent prosperity of the wicked, they argue, or rather assert, is not real; the happiness which their outward possession may seem to ensure is destroyed by inward forebodings.” Driver and Gray, Job, 1:137.

316 Reading with Dhorme, who notes that מִסְפָר is in the plural because the number of years that are laid up for the tyrant should be understood as a collective. Dhorme, Job, 216.

317 Dhorme notes that this phrase מִסְפָר שָׁנִים does not mean “fewness in years” which would have been expressed through the phrases מִסְפָר שָׁנִים or מִסְפָר שָׁעִים. Rather מִסְפָר שָׁנִים corresponds to מִסְפָר יָמִים as מִסְפָר שָׁעִים corresponds to מִסְפָר שָׁנֵי. Thus, this is another way of stating “all the days of the wicked man.” Ibid., 215-16.
that the wicked do not enjoy longevity. Eliphaz never directly states the offenses of the wicked, or what qualifies a person as such, but rather, the perpetual fear, disposition, and ultimate destiny of the wicked. In this manner, Eliphaz relates his discourse to experiences with which Job is already familiar.

As a result of their iniquity, the wicked experience perpetual anxiety and consequently fall prey to delusion. Frightful sounds resound in their ears (בְאָׁזְנָיו פְחָׁדִים קוֹל), horrifying them as they are forever cognizant of the forthcoming judgment as a consequence of their wickedness. At the moment in which the wicked perceive a semblance of peace, the impious fall prey to the judgment due them by being accosted by a thief ([בְשָׁלוֹם שוֹדֵד יְבוֹאֶנּו] [v. 21]), who dispossesses them of all the ill-gotten gain they accumulate. Nevertheless, the terror which sounds in the ears of the wicked is a product of their imagination.

The theme of the wicked undergoing sudden trepidation once again appears in v. 24 in which distress terrifies the wicked (דֶּרֶךְ וְיְבֻּעַ), and anguish overpowers them (וְמְצוּקָׁה תִתְקְפֵהוּ), causing the wicked to experience terror as if being assaulted by a king equipped for battle (כְּמֶלֶךְ עָׁתִיד ל כִידוֹר).

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318 The rapid disappearance of the wicked is found elsewhere in the Bible. See for example, Ps 37:10 (שׁוּר שֵׁם אֵין רָשָׁע), and especially vv. 35-36 where the wicked and ruthless (רָשָׁע, לְשׁוֹנָה רָשָׁע) quickly disappear and can no longer be found. See also the discussion in chapter 5 of this work, which discusses Zophar’s comments relating to the wicked flying away in 20:8.

319 Habel, Job, 252.

320 Driver and Gray, Job, 2:98, Dhorne, Job, 216. Clines calls the result of the torment of the wicked “mental torture.” Clines, Job 1-20, 357.

321 Dhorme, Job, 216.

322 This same idea of the wicked being confronted with their judgment during a period of apparent serenity is expressed by Zophar in 20:22. Zophar also elaborates upon the judgments of those who have achieved their wealth through unjustly attaining ill-gotten gain. The repossession of ill-gotten gain is in accordance with a traditional wisdom theme from the ancient Near East and will be more thoroughly treated in section 5.2.2.

323 Pope, Job, 117.

324 The phrase כִידוֹר has caused interpreters problems. It seems reasonable to understand the phrase כִידוֹר as “ready for” based upon its parallel לְשׁוֹנָה וְיְבֻּעַ in Esth 3:14 and 8:13. The major issue has been the hapax legomenon כִידוֹר. Tur-Sinaï suggests, in accordance with his interpretation of the word כִידוֹר ultimately meaning “brace oneself,” that כִידוֹר means “for warlike rebellion.” Tur-Sinaï comments that this might be related to the word כִדוּר in Isa 29:3, but ultimately admits that the origin of the word כִדוּר is unknown. Tur-Sinaï, Job, 255. Dhorme notes that כִדוּר has the same form as כִּזֶּר “smoke” and is a cognate of the Arabic kadara, which in a secondary form...
wicked. The mental condition that the wicked create for themselves is illusive, eventually leading to a psychotic state in which they are not capable of perceiving reality.\footnote{Clines asserts that “it is the wicked man’s own fears and anxieties that finally prove his undoing.” \textit{Job} 1-20, 358.}

### 3.1.2 Terror for the Wicked in Biblical Literature

In other sections of the Bible, God is portrayed as the one who intentionally denies peace and prosperity to the wicked. For instance, Isaiah likens the wicked to the volatile sea whose lack of serenity is attributed to God. God declares that there is no peace for the wicked (אֵין שָׁלוֹם אָלֹה ה לָׁרְשָׁעִים [57:20-21]).

Furthermore, anxiety which leads to madness is one of the worst punishments upon the wicked.\footnote{Scheindlin, \textit{Job}, 183.} In fact, Lev 26:17 outlines the consequences if the people of Israel do not listen to God.\footnote{In Deuteronomy as well there are several references to punishing the people with madness (e.g. Deut 28:28-29). See Moshe Weinfeld, \textit{Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School} (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 118ff. for a comparison with Neo-Assyrian treaty curses.} This verse states that if the people were to default on carrying out the commands of God, not only would they be defeated and ruled over by their enemies (לִפְנֵי אוֹיְבֵיכֶם וְרָׁדוּ בָׁכֶם שֹנְאֵיכֶם), but they would flee without being pursued (רֹדֵף אֶתְכֶם - וְנִסְתֶם וְאֵין). According to this verse, Israel’s disobedience would lead the people into a great delusion. Yet, this imagery is reversed in the very same chapter in that God promises the obedient remnant that illogical panic would be instilled into the hearts of the people’s enemies, to the point where they would flee from the sound of a windblown leaf (וְאֵין רֹדֵף לוּ חֶרֶב וְנִסְתֶם וְאֵין כָּלֵל עָלֶה נִדָּף. [v. 36]). Israel’s enemies witlessly flee...
from a leaf, falling down, as though they were fleeing from the attack of a sword. Yet again, the whole violent encounter upon Israel’s foes is illusory. Israel’s enemies go mad by divine mandate and flee when no one is actually pursuing them.

This idea of the wicked becoming anxious and consequently delusional is likewise apparent in biblical wisdom literature. For example, Prov 28:1 contrasts the wicked with the righteous by once again asserting that the wicked flee (רֹדֵף רָׁשָׁע) when there is no one pursuing, but the righteous are secure like a lion. The proverb depicts the wicked in a psychologically unstable position as they strive to escape illusory pursuers. The wicked cannot live in peace because they are invariably aware that dreadful consequences lurk. The imagery is explicit in depicting the impious eventually going mad and striving to escape figments of their imaginations.

3.1.3 Terror for the Wicked in Extra-Biblical Literature

There appears to be similar imagery relating to the anxiety and perpetual fear associated with the sufferer in *Ludhul*. In the first tablet the sufferer describes his physical woes and discloses the emotional distress associated with his tremendous hardship. As the sufferer reveals his sentiments, his grievance transcends the physical domain into the psychological domain and exposes the sufferer’s agony:

| usṣallim panīya adirat libbīya  | “My face was darkened by the apprehension of my heart. Terror and panic turn my flesh pale. |
| šīrīya ʿūtarriqū piritum u ḥattum ināṭi libbīya ina gītalūti irtūbā | |

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328 The word רָׁשָׁע in phrase רָׁשָׁע רֹדֵף is a collective in this context and corresponds to the plural verb נָׁס.

329 The lion imagery as applied to the secure person is apparently used as a positive characteristic in this context. See Strawn, “*What is Stronger than a Lion,*” 49, for a discussion with regard to this apparently positive view.

My guts trembled in *perpetual fear*…”

Tablet I:111-113

It is clear within the overall context of *Ludlul* that it is indeed Marduk who is responsible for the turmoil brought upon the sufferer. *Ludlul* also features the imagery of fleeing a pursuant chasing someone, but unlike Job and the other biblical examples, it is the supposed “pious sufferer” who is sought. This is evident through the brief comment which the sufferer makes upon his despair in being pursued:

| kal ūmu rēdū iriddanni | All day long a persecutor would pursue [me], nor at night did he let me breathe freely for a moment. Tablet II: 102-03 |
| ina šāt mūši ul unappašanni surriš |                                                                                                                 |

It is difficult to state conclusively who the unnamed pursuer is in *Ludlul*, and the context does not particularly help. What is obvious, however, is that the sufferer’s physical pain affects his mental condition to the point where the sufferer complains about being pursued by an unnamed assailant. It is reasonable to suggest that this unnamed assailant is unidentified because he is imaginary. Along with the physical torment the sufferer endures in *Ludlul*, the lines quoted above may be a commentary on the declining condition of the sufferer’s mental health. Additionally, it is significant that it is the “pious sufferer” in *Ludlul* who is being chased. It becomes evident toward the end of the composition that he is indeed not innocent. The sufferer’s admission to iniquity after having endured mental hardship lends to the idea that guilty people indeed suffer mental anguish.

### 3.2 Darkness & Violence—vv. 22-23 & 30

There are additional consequences for the wicked beyond being in a state of panic and fear, according to Eliphaz. The wicked perceive that they will never return to normality from their state

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332 Ibid., 22, 37.
of darkness (כַּל-אֲדֹمֶה יֵה הָאָכָל), and anticipate a violent demise because they are destined for the sword (בֵּין עַל-חֵרֶב [v. 22]). This awareness of death is reiterated through Eliphaz reemphasizing the lack of sustenance resulting from impiety, just as he previously alluded to it in 4:10-11 (i.e., "לָשׁוּנַי אֵלִי כָּלִֽלְךָ [v. 23a]) and through this detail, imagery concerning the wicked eventually experiencing a lack of sustenance once again emerges.336 Not only are the wicked deprived of food, but they also know that the day of darkness (i.e. of their judgment) is surely at hand (יָּדִֽן יֵה הָאָכָל [v. 23b]).337

Eliphaz again uses imagery relating to darkness along with botanic imagery338 to spell out judgment in v. 30. He asserts that the wicked cannot escape the darkness (i.e. death and the

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333 Dhorme befittingly suggests that the verb יָרָא with the preposition כִּי before a particular misfortune has the sense of not simply “to return from,” but rather, “to escape from.” Dhorme, Job, 217. See Job 33:30 as well as Ps 35:17, where this construction is used with the hiphil form of יָרָא and the preposition כִּי.

334 Dhorme rightfully points out that there is no need to emend the word יָרָא because it is the qal passive form of the verb יָרָא “look out or about, spy keep watch” (BDB, 859) just as יָרָא is the qal passive form of the verb יָשׁוּר in 41:25. The qere form restores the more normal form. Ibid., 217.

335 Many commentators emend יָרָא to read יָרָא “vulture,” and suggest that the wicked are fed as food to vultures. Dhorme states that יָרָא “denotes a whole species of rapacious creatures mentioned among the unclean animals” in Lev 11:14, Deut 14:13 as well as in Job 28:7. According to Dhorme, יָרָא is related to the Arabic terms yāyā or yāyū (BDB, 17, only lists yāyū [יָרָא] which it defines as a type of hawk). Dhorme, Job, 218. The following commentators agree that יָרָא should be read as some sort of bird: Pope, Job, 117; Andersen, Job, 192; Clines, Job 1-20, 343, 358; Habel, Job, 247.

This is admittedly a strong reading, which is supported by the OG rendering of the word “vulture.” Additionally, the wicked being fed to vultures certainly coincides with the doctrine of just retribution. However, there are problems with this translation. Initially, is seems that the translation of “vulture” overly relies upon the Old Greek phrase κατατέθηκα τῇ εἰς στήν γυνᾶ (e.g. Pope, Job, 117; Rowley, Job, 112). Additionally, by using the verb κατατέθηκα, the OG suggests that the MT’s יָרָא was understood by the translator as יָרָא and consequently another emendation becomes necessary to make sense of the phrase (e.g., Seow reads the pual infinitive absolute μεταβατεις thus, “he will be scattered” [Job 1-21, 718]). However, the Greek text can be understood in light of the MT in that it is more likely that the Greek translator misunderstood the peculiar Hebrew phrase יָרָא לֵבָן אֲלָמָה the Hebrew scribes misunderstanding or miscopying לֵבָן and יָרָא. I suggest that it is possible to make sense of the line without emendation despite its being the more difficult reading. The wicked wander looking for bread (i.e. food) but it cannot be found. Additionally, there is a precedent for this type of phrase indicating a search for food in Lam 2:12 (זְבִלָּא). See Amos Hakham, Job (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1984), 117 [Hebrew]. This verse is a continuation of Job’s friends’ emphasis on the poverty motif, which began in 4:10-11, continues in vv. 27-29, and most thoroughly asserted by Zophar in chapter 20. Wilson also recognizes that this line possibly “refers to the tenuousness of the life of the wicked, who rootlessly wanders and can find nothing to eat.” Wilson, Job, 169.

336 Rowley, Job, 112.

337 Hakham, Job, 117.

338 Botanic imagery is further discussed below in section 3.5.
netherworld) that awaits them (לֹא יָׁסוּר מִנִּי-חֹשֶךְ), on account of a flame which withers their branch (יֹנְקֶתֶר הַחֹשֶךְ). God is responsible for the destruction of the wicked, claims Eliphaz, in that the wicked will depart by the breath of God’s mouth (בְּרוּחַ פִיו).\(^{339}\) This statement is in agreement with Eliphaz’s earlier contention that sowers of trouble (חֹרְשֵי אָׁוֶן וְזֹרְעֵי עָׁמָל) will perish by the breath of God (4:8-9).\(^{340}\)

The repeated mentioning of darkness\(^{341}\) brings to mind Eliphaz’s earlier statements in 5:12-14 regarding this same theme. In Job 5 Eliphaz uses more subtle language to describe the consequences of impiety, calling those who do not honor God “crafty” and “wise.” Eliphaz claims that God thwarts the plans of the crafty causing them to be unsuccessful by catching the “wise” in their deviousness. Therefore, God quickly does away with their counsel (vv. 12-13). The consequence for these would-be “wise” people is that they are deprived of light and are forced to grope during the day as if they were searching during the night (v. 14). The meaning of these statements seems to be quite clear—God turns the shrewd genius of the supposed wise into stupidity, to the point where they are no longer able to make sensible decisions; rather, they become completely ignorant.\(^{342}\)

In Job 15, Eliphaz escalates the meaning of this darkness, not only applying it to the confusion of the counsel of the impious, but to the wicked themselves. Eliphaz has finished with subtleties, indicated through his usage of the darkness imagery in the midst of a commentary on the fate of the wicked and suggesting that it applies to Job if he does not turn back to God. As


\(^{341}\) Imagery related to light and darkness is mentioned again by Bildad in chapter 18. That chapter is treated in chapter 4 of this work.

\(^{342}\) Hartley, *Job*, 122.
opposed to God simply hindering the plans of the "crafty" through darkness, Eliphaz intensifies his rhetoric and uses the imagery of darkness to propose the ultimate fate of the wicked—death.\textsuperscript{343}

This intensification is exhibited by means of Eliphaz’s repetition of darkness with the violent death of the wicked in vv. 22, 30, and implied starvation in v. 23. The phrase “the day of darkness” (יוֹם-חֹשֶךְ) is particularly telling in v. 23 in that this phrase is used elsewhere in the Bible (cf. Amos 5:18-20; Zeph 1:15) to indicate divine judgment upon the unrighteous.\textsuperscript{344} Habel notes the conjunction of violence and darkness, stating, “(n)ot only is ‘darkness’ the wicked man’s nemesis (v. 22a), and the ‘day of darkness’ his appointed fate (v. 23c), but ‘darkness’ is the world he will experience in death (v. 30a).”\textsuperscript{345} The pairing of darkness and violence reflects the motif present in Job of darkness being closely associated with death.\textsuperscript{346} Clines notes that regardless of whether darkness is what awaits the wicked or what they presently experience, “to be in darkness must mean to be already as good as dead…”\textsuperscript{347}

\textbf{3.3 \textit{Reason for Retribution: The Wicked Challenge God—vv. 25-26}}

The punishment of the wicked is completely warranted within the just retribution paradigm and therefore, as expected, Eliphaz draws attention to the misdeeds of the wicked as rationalization for the punishment they deserve. According to Eliphaz, those who receive the retribution he describes reap the consequences of their defiance against God.\textsuperscript{348} In fact, Eliphaz depicts the wicked person brazenly challenging God by the stretching out of the hand to God (כִי-נָׁטָה אֶל-אֵל).

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{343} “Darkness also conveys the trauma of dying.” Ibid., 251.
  \item \textsuperscript{344} Seow, \textit{Job 1-21}, 704-05.
  \item \textsuperscript{345} Habel, \textit{Job}, 259-60.
  \item \textsuperscript{346} Ibid., 259. In 17:13 Job craves darkness once again, thereby expressing his desire to die. Bildad uses this same theme to describe the fate of the wicked being a banishment from the world in 18:18. See chapter 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{347} Clines, \textit{Job 1-20}, 357-58. Death as the appropriate consequence for the wicked is distinctly communicated in Ps 37:9-10, 20, 34, 38, and particularly in Ps 73:27, where punishment is explicitly indicated as an act of God (ךָרְחֵיק וְיֹאֵדוּ הָמָכָה כָּל-זוֹנֶה מִמֶּךָ).
  \item \textsuperscript{348} Longman, \textit{Job}, 229.
\end{itemize}
The imagery of the outstretched hand is used elsewhere in the Bible to display God's power. This power is demonstrated in the deliverance of God's people, as well as God acting strongly against the people. Now, the wicked are depicted thrusting their hand at God as if endeavoring to overcome the Almighty through their opposition (וֹיָדָהּ [v. 25]).

There is, however, a bit of irony in Eliphaz' comments in relation to Job's circumstances. Eliphaz elaborates upon the consequences of the wicked in order to encourage Job to turn away from those things that might be bringing about the tragic repercussions he is forced to endure. In doing so, Eliphaz makes reference to the wicked stretching out their hand toward God in defiance. Eliphaz makes this statement unaware that Job does not suffer because he stretched out his hand in order to confront God; rather, Job suffers because God had permitted the Satan to stretch out his hand against Job (1:11; 2:5 [ךָנָא יָדְ אֵלָׁיו]). Contrary to Eliphaz' claims, Job's defiance is rooted in his integrity and not in a desire to triumph over God. Job is forced to boldly speak out because of what he perceives to be injustice. Yet, behind the scenes it is indeed the Satan casting his hand toward Job.

Oblivious to the heavenly scenes, Eliphaz portrays the wicked (potentially Job), not only challenging God, but seemingly initiating an actual battle against the Almighty in v. 26. The wicked proceed to arrogantly run toward the Almighty in their rebellion (with ).

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349 Dhorme states that the expression יָדְ נָטָה refers to the stretching forth of one's hand in order to strike someone. Dhorme, Job, 220. Cf. 15:26 and 1:11. See also Wilson, Job, 169. These observations suggest that the image being presented in v. 25 is that the wicked dare to take harsh action against God. For further discussion regarding the expressions יָדְ נָטָה and יָדְ נָטָה, see Paul Humbert, “Etendre la main,” VT 12 (1962): 383-95.

350 See for example the phrase יָדְ נָטָה in Deut 26:8 and Ps 136:12.


352 Dhorme, Job, 219-20, Seow, Job 1-21, 719-20.

353 Hartley, Job, 252.

354 Janzen, Job, 118.

355 There is disagreement with regard to how concrete the imagery portrayed in v. 26 should be translated. Does the neck here refer to an abstract quality like “stubborn” as portrayed in the RSV, or something more concrete as in the NEB “head down”? Tur-Sinai additionally notes that what could be in focus is not an actual person’s neck, but rather the “neck of his armour”—namely, the hauberker. Tur-Sinai, Job, 256. See also Pope, Job, 118; Andersen, Job, 178, n. 2. More recently, Seow argues for hauberker, citing the Akkadian analogy of kišadum “neck” also being
their thickly bossed shields\textsuperscript{356} (מָׁגִנָּיו גּ ב עֲבִי גְּבֵי [v. 26]). Needless to say, initiating combat with God is a most contemptuous act and serves as striking imagery aimed at depicting the tremendous arrogance of the wicked. The haughtiness of the wicked precipitates Eliphaz’s elaboration upon their harmful consequences.

3.4 Loss and Futility of Possessions, Again—15:27-29

3.4.1 Fatness of the Prosperous & Impious—v. 27

The warrior whom Eliphaz imagines in v. 26 is not at all fit to engage in battle\textsuperscript{358} and is overtly identified as wicked through the fate depicted in vv. 27-29. This haughty would-be combatant is pictured as an overweight criminal bound to suffer poverty and dispossession of his riches, which are the inevitable consequences of his misdeeds. The impious man is depicted in v. 27 as overindulgent and bloated, covering his face with fat (כִּסָׁה פָּנָיו בְחֶלְב). The explicit nature of this imagery, and the stoutness of the person, becomes apparent in v. 27b, where Eliphaz references the overweight person putting fat over his sinews (כָּסֶל עֲלֵי פִימָׁה \textsuperscript{359}). This depiction of the

\textsuperscript{356} Literally, “thickness of the bosses of their shields.”

\textsuperscript{357} Dhorme interestingly contends that the word גּ ב “back” originally meant the word “boss”—that is, the stud on the center of a shield. Dhorme notes that the corresponding Assyrian root to גּ ב supplies the words gabābu and kabābu “buckler.” Hence, “boss of the buckler” is a technical term which describes “a buckler of a bulging shape, the thick embossment of which forms a hump” which Dhorme claims was the type of buckler that was well known to the Babylonian and Assyrian soldiers. Dhorme, Job, 220. See CAD, K, 1, which defines kabābu as “shield.”

\textsuperscript{358} Rowley, Job, 113.

\textsuperscript{359} Tur-Sinai suggests that פִימָׁה means “fat, grease” and compares it to the Arabic words faˈima “to be fat” and fayyim “fat, stout.” Tur-Sinai, Job, 256-57. Dhorme agrees that פִימָׁה is related to the Arabic faˈima and states that the word is in reference to the camel’s neck. Dhorme, Job, 221. The general agreement is that this word is related to “fat.”
overweight person stretching fat over the sinews is revealing in that the word כֶסֶל also takes on the derived meaning of “inner strength” and “confidence.” Therefore, the imagery of the overindulgent man can be understood as a depiction of the impious striving to build up their inner strength in rebellion against God.

Further insight into the meaning of the overweight man is gleaned in light of the imagery of the wicked in other sections of Job and the Hebrew Bible, which coincide with the biblical motif of fatness being identified with prosperity. Fatness in the Hebrew Bible can signify strength, as well as indicate prosperity endowed by the hand of God. Yet, this same imagery related to fatness brings to mind the common biblical idea of the arrogant, rebellious wicked who obtain wealth and thereby become fat by means of attaining ill-gotten gain.

This arrogance is illustrated through the imagery of fatness in the Song of Moses in which Jeshurun’s opulence engenders a rebellious spirit against God, whom they consequently spurn (וֹו יְנ בֵּל צוּר יְשֻעָׁת טֹש אֱלוֹה ִי וֹו שִיתָׁ עָׁבִיתָׁ כָׁשָׁמ נְתָׁ עָׁבִי [Deut 32:15]). Another striking picture is the one painted by Jeremiah, which combines the imagery of the stout person with affluence attained by ill-gotten gain. In describing the wicked (רְשֵׁשִׁים) who exploit others, Jeremiah states that they attained their wealth by deceitful means (בָׁתֵיהֶם מְלֵאִים מִרְמָׁה עֲלָיִם גָּדוּלו [Jer 39:16]).

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361 Wilson, Job, 169. This fat person is described in many ways by interpreters. Dhorme notes that it is not uncommon in the Bible for the wicked to be characterized as sleek and stout and states that this verse refers to “a bloated egoist who in greed puts on fat.” Dhorme, Job, 221.


363 Cf. Job 36:16; Pss 63:5-6, 92:15. Longman, Job, 229. Wilson notes in more sociological terms that, “(i)n some societies, fat and physical heaviness reflect one’s prosperity and security—a fat person is able to secure abundant food and need not fear starvation” (bold his). Wilson, Job, 169.

364 See Pope, Job, 118.
Then Jeremiah attributes the fatness of the wicked to their ill-gotten gain (וּשָּׁמְנוּ עָׁשְתָּם וּכְעִירָם עֲשִיר [5:28]). These wicked are physically abusive, greedy robbers who the Lord is intent on punishing for their exploitation of the weak (5:28-29).366

Eliphaz’s mentioning of the fat person in describing the wicked and rebellious brings to mind the familiar biblical imagery of the affluent and haughty victimizer, who considers God unnecessary because of his abundant possessions—possessions which may be understood to have been attained through exploitation of the weak. Though367 the wicked are seemingly affluent, and thereby fat, they cannot maintain their possessions in the retributive justice paradigm. Ibn Ezra suggests that the accumulation of fat should be understood allegorically as the wicked person becoming extremely affluent to the point where his face is figuratively coated with fat. Nevertheless, according to Ibn Ezra, the wicked man loses all of his wealth because of his depravity.368 Eliphaz proceeds to mention two consequences for the wicked in vv. 28-29—both of which have to do with the impermanence of the apparent affluence of the wicked.

3.4.2 The Impious Prosperous Pass into Poverty—vv. 28-29

Whereas one might expect the rich to build prosperous cities and rule over their inhabitants, the wicked dwell in desolate towns (ֶוֹכֶסֶף נִכְחָדוֹ [v. 28a-b]). Similar wording is used in the Bible to illustrate that desolate houses and uninhabited cities are viewed as divine judgment against the impious. For example, Isaiah reports


367 I read the conjunctive particle כִּי to mean “though” in v. 27a (כִּי כָּסָּת פָּנָיו בְחֶלְב כִּי) as is translated in the NIV. Andersen likewise states that the proper translation of this word should be “though” as opposed to “because.” The implication of this reading is that the stubbornness is a result of someone who is fat, as opposed to the rebellious being fat because of their obstinance towards God. Andersen, *Job*, 193.

that one of God’s judgments would be that many houses, even the biggest and nicest would be completely desolate (בָּתִּים רֵבִים לְשֵׁמוֹ נִיוֹי גְּדוֹלִים וְטוֹבִים פַּשְׁרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל [5:9]).

Likewise, Jeremiah communicates a warning he received from the Lord for the king of Judah warning him of the consequences he would face if he does not protect the helpless and pursue righteousness (22:1-5). God swore to the king that his house would be ruins (לְחָֽרְבָּה יִהְיֶה הֵז הַבֵּית [22:5]), a prophecy which evidently came to pass when Nebuzaradan attacked Jerusalem and burned, not only the royal palace, but also the Lord’s house (נֶבֶז אָחָה-יְרוּשָׁלָ֖ם יְרוּשָׁלָם [22:5]), and all of the houses of Jerusalem—including the most important/biggest buildings (בֵּית יְהוָֽה וְאֶת-בֵּית ה-מֶלֶךְ [52:13]). The destruction of the city was something that was forewarned by the prophet in his encouragement of the people to serve the king of Babylon, saying, “Serve the king of Babylon and live! Why should this city become ruins?” (חָֽרְבָּה יִֽהְיֶה [27:17]). Thus in the Bible, the desolation of houses, and even cities, is a clear sign of judgment against the rebellious by God.

Additionally, Eliphaz’s claim that the houses of the city are piles of rubble (אֲשֶׁר הֵתֹ֣דֲלָ֑לָם [v. 28c]), brings to mind Job’s words in 3:14. In Job 3 the kings and counselors of the earth who built ruins for themselves (הַבָּנוּ יְרוּשָׁלָֽם לְצִבְּאֵת לָ֖ם) are assigned to the place of the dead. In that context, Job envisions being in the place of the dead with nobility who had once presumably ruled the earth, but now their cities are destroyed. Job had previously mentioned how it was impossible to take anything to the place of the dead (1:21) and in 3:14 he comments upon how this actually looks when nobility die. In 15:28 Eliphaz seemingly alludes to Job’s monologue in chapter 3 and uses the idea of mounds of rubble to portray the fate of the wicked. Like the former rulers in the place of the dead, the wicked are left with nothing. However in 15:28, the wicked are not in

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369 Ps 49:14-20 makes the same point with regard to not being able to take one’s wealth into the realm of the dead. In this psalm the fool and all who follow him are deprived of their possessions upon entering the netherworld.
the place of the dead like the earthly rulers of 3:14—they are alive and rebellious. Since they are rebellious, like the king of Judah after his disobedience, they are forced to behold the consequences of their impiety. Whereas those previous rulers according to Job are able to escape the problems of the world in the realm of the dead, this would-be ruler of v. 28—who represents the wicked—is forced to lurch in the repercussions of human rebellion. The wicked have nothing and are forced to live in desolation, where they wander looking for food as in v. 23. The wicked end up destitute, waiting for imminent judgment.370

This idea of the wicked becoming impoverished extends into v. 29, which affirms the retributive justice idea that the wicked experience prosperity for only a brief period of time. It becomes clear in v. 29 that the stout person of v. 27 is apparently a rich man. Eliphaz elaborates in v. 29 upon the consequences of the wicked rich man of v. 27 in explicitly stating that he will indeed not truly become rich (לֹא-יֶעְשׂ ר). The seemingly affluent person of v. 27 is rid of his possessions in v. 29 following the common wisdom theme of the wicked eventually losing their ill-gotten gain. The reason for the lack of prosperity, according to Eliphaz, is immediately stated. The wicked’s wealth will not endure the test of time (לֹא-יִטֶה לָארֶץ מִנְלָם).

Up to this point, it is clear what Eliphaz is declaring with regard to the privation of the possessions of the wicked. Yet, v. 29c (לֹא-יִטֶה לָארֶץ מִנְלָם) is notoriously difficult, particularly because the hapax legomenon מִנְלָם is barely understood and has prompted an array of suggestions. Most commentators suggest that the context indicates that מִנְלָם is a word relating to possessions, and associate the word with Arabic manāl “possession”—either in the plural or with enclitic

370 Hartley, Job, 251-52.
mem. 371 Others appeal to the versions and emend based upon what they consider to be reasonable from the witnesses. 372

Nevertheless, these suggestions are found wanting. Initially, the appeal to Arabic references a remote derivative meaning of the word ʾbīl. 373 Additionally, appealing to the versions provides a variety of suggestions which point to the conclusion that there was a misunderstanding of the obscure Hebrew word ʿnālām on the part of the translators. For example, the Old Greek renders the word ʿskwān “shadow,” which likely reflects the Hebrew word, ʿḇālā which also portrays something ephemeral. The Vulgate, translates this phrase radicem suam “his root” which probably reflects ʿḇālā—a form phonetically close to the understanding of the Old Greek. The Targum seems to reflect a word similar to the consonantal text of the MT by translating ʿmnālām, parsing the word as the preposition ʿn plus a plural pronominal suffix “of theirs.” 374 This perhaps reflects a

371 See Pope, Job, 118-19; Hartley, Job, 249-50, n. 15; Clines, Job 1-20, 343.
372 Namely, Dhorme (followed by Rowley [Job, 114.]) emends to ʿnālām based upon the Greek ʿskwān. Dhorme, Job, 222. Seow appeals to both Arabic and the versions in positing that the confusion regarding ʿnēlam is a text critical issue which should be understood in light of the conservative orthography of the book of Job. Seow accepts the idea that this word is a cognate from Arabic manāl, yet considers the third person plural possessive suffix to be awkward because there is no appropriate antecedent. Thus, as opposed to positing an awkward possessive suffix, Seow reads ʿmnālām, the masculine plural of the word ʿmnālā in accordance with Kennicott manuscript 145 which has ʿmnālām, thereby explaining the form that is represented in MT as reflecting conservative orthography.

Seow proceeds to suggest that there is a genuine textual variant in the word ʾsāḵ, which Jerome evidently read in his Vorlage (radicem) and understood to mean “root.” This word, notes Seow, can also mean “property, assets” in its comparable cognate forms in Nabatean and Arabic. Thus, assuming conservative orthography, the plural form of ʾsāḵ would be ʾsāḵām, and would essentially reflect the same meaning as ʿmnālam “possessions.” Seow ultimately prefers to read ʾsāḵām (as ṣāḵālim), asserting that v. 29b provides a context for both of the meanings of this word—“roots” and “possessions.” Thus, this line can be understood as affirming that: 1) the wicked cannot spread their possessions in the netherworld (Seow, appealing to Ps 49:15-21, understands the word ʾsāḵ to refer to the netherworld), and 2) the wicked will not be deeply rooted. Both of these meanings can be read in light of v. 30 according to Seow, the second bringing to mind Job’s comment regarding the hope that there is for a tree in that its shoot will not cease—that is, it can regenerate (14:7). See Choon Leong Seow, “Orthography, Textual Criticism, and the Poetry of Job,” JBL 130 (2011): 78-79, and more recently, Seow, Job 1-21, 722-23.

373 Greenstein notes that it would be derived from a secondary form of the VI conjugation. Edward L. Greenstein, “On the Use of Akkadian in Biblical Hebrew Philology,” in Looking at the Ancient Near East and the Bible through the Same Eyes: A Tribute to Aaron Skaist (ed. Kathleen Abraham and Joseph Fleishman; Bethesda: CDL Press, 2012), 351. Greenstein questions the potential Arabic etymology in stating, “the verb nāla is well attested in the sense of ‘giving,’ so that the well-known meaning of the noun manālā is ‘gift.’ Manāl in the sense of ‘attainment, acquisition’ would seem to be derived only secondarily from nīl ‘to obtain’ in the VI conjugation; someone causes someone else to be given something, and so that person receives or obtains. What is received or obtained is the manālā. It is very improbable that the noun manālā would have been attested with the secondary sense of ‘possessions’ in ancient times.”

374 Seow, Job 1-21, 722-23.
putative combination of the two Hebrew words מִנְלָׁם. These observations from the versions suggest either emendations to the consonantal text of the MT or another explanation for the dubious word מִנְלָׁם.

Greenstein proposes a philological solution to this problem and suggests that מִנְלָׁם is a cognate of the Akkadian word nēmelu and not from the Arabic نَمِل. Perceiving from context that the Hebrew word מִנְלָׁם must mean something like “wealth,” and not simply “possessions,” Greenstein posits that מִנְלָׁם is a metathesized version of the Akkadian noun nēmelu “gain, profit” with a possessive suffix. Greenstein observes that the word עָׁמָׁל is also a Hebrew cognate of nēmelu, which sometimes bears the same meaning (“gain, profit”). Therefore, it is appropriate that another cognate from nēmelu (מִנְלָם) is parallel to ח יִל in Job 15:29. Greenstein supports this theory by appealing to Job 20:18, another verse which deals with the temporary wealth of the wicked, and points out that the word יָׁגָא, “profit,” a word identical in form to עָׁמָל, is in parallel to ח יִל. Thus, Greenstein concludes concerning Job 15:29 that, “(w)e should not be surprised to find a pair there, in which מִנְלָם— a word for “profit” derived from the primary sense of “toil”—functions just as the word עָׁמָל—a word for “profit” derived from a verb with the primary sense of “toil.”

Greenstein’s suggestion provides a credible way to understand all of the Hebrew characters without emendation. Additionally, though Greenstein’s explanation does not explicitly clarify all of the versions, it provides a reasonable explanation as to why the versions may be so diverse. The translator of the OG did not understand the literary language of the poet of Job, and in particular, was not sufficiently schooled in Akkadian to recognize this metathesized cognate. Greenstein

375 Tur-Sinai states that מִנְלָם should thus be understood, in approximate agreement with ancient commentators... מִן לָׁם 'of that which is theirs', of their substance.” Tur-Sinai, Job, 258.
376 See Greenstein, "Akkadian in Biblical Hebrew Philology," 350-53 for a comprehensive treatment and defense of the following explanation.
377 Ibid., 353.
convincingly argues that the usage of מִנְלָׁם in Job 15:29 is not simply the manifestation of a dubious hapax legomenon, but rather the usage of an Akkadian cognate by the knowledgeable author of Job.

In light of the aforementioned imagery alluding to the eventual poverty and solitude of the wicked (vv. 23a, 28), it is evident that what is at issue is the ephemerality of the wicked’s wealth. Considering this, the complete sense of 15:29b develops: The wicked are not able to spread their riches upon the earth. The riches of the wicked are fleeting in such a manner that they pass through their hands without them having a chance to use them in order to multiply their abundance through the land.

3.5 Botanic Imagery & the Wicked—vv. 30-33

3.5.1 Dwindling in Darkness—v. 30

The transition to botanic imagery in v. 30 commences an elaboration of the tree metaphor which Bildad utilized in 8:11-15. Eliphaz’s imagery is not original, nor is his theology. The wicked will be unfruitful and suffer an early demise. Job must turn back to God and put away those things in his heart that hinder his devotion. If Job does not do this, the familiar retribution principle will be at work, and Job will have to suffer the consequences of the wicked. In v. 30 Eliphaz continues to depict these consequences metaphorically.

The plant reference of v. 30 begins by reiterating an allusion to “darkness” (ךחוש). Some commentators consider the mention of darkness to be redundant and suggest it should be deleted.

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378 That is, as opposed to those who might see a reference to the underworld in this context. See Clines, Job 1-20, 343.
380 Eliphaz attests to this point himself when in v. 10 he sides with traditional wisdom, and proceeds to expound upon the retribution theology of the ancients.
381 For example, Dhorme considers this simply to be a paraphrase of v. 22a and recommends deletion. Dhorme, Job, 223.
Nevertheless, this reference to darkness recalls Eliphaz’s previous comments about darkness, and the mentioning of חֹשֶך in v. 30 reintroduces the darkness-death imagery relating to the fate of the wicked. This reintroduction of darkness in combined with likening the wicked to a branch-producing tree in v. 30b. This tree is stranded in a place of darkness, unable to depart, and is deprived of the light it needs to grow. Even if the tree were somehow able to produce branches without light, a hot wind would dry its shoots. Yet, like any tree positioned in the dark for an extended period of time, this tree is extremely weak and is uprooted by the breath of the mouth of God. Just as Eliphaz had previously claimed in 4:9, God is the one who casts judgment upon the wicked by simply breathing upon them.

3.5.2 A Worthless Exchange—v. 31

Eliphaz’s next statement comes somewhat as a surprise to those expecting him to continue with the tree imagery. This anticipation has caused many interpreters great difficulty and has led to a variety of emendations or suggestions for relocation. Yet, Eliphaz does not, in fact, continue with the same exact imagery. Rather, vv. 31-32a consist of three lines that, while related to the botanic imagery presented in vv. 30 and 32b-33, reflect general conventional wisdom. After the vivid imagery of God exacting judgment through breath, Eliphaz emerges from his densely

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382 Wilson notes a connection between vv. 22 and 30, stating that, “(i)n verse 22, the wicked ‘despairs of escaping darkness,’ while now the impossibility of escape is declared an inevitable reality.” Job, 170.

383 Though the word חֹשֶך can mean “flame” (see BDB, 529) as in Ezek 21:3, referring to a forest fire (as noted by Rowley, Job, 114), the חֹשֶך in this context is drying as opposed to burning. Therefore, the term should be understood as a sort of intense heat. The OG preserves this idea referring to a wind withering a shoot (τὸν βλαστὸν αὐτοῦ μαρὰναι ἄνεμος). Seow, Job 1-21, 723.

384 Hakham, Job, 119. Dhorme takes issue with the suggestion that this could be referring to God’s mouth because God is not referred to from v. 27. Also, the breath of God’s mouth is his word and not his anger, which is more properly reflected by the image of the breath of God’s nostrils (Cf. 4:9). For these reasons, Dhorme follows the Greek as the original text because he claims that it continues the comparison with the tree. The Greek reading is αὐτοῦ τῷ ἀνθός which corresponds to the Hebrew צחו as opposed to פִיו: “And his blossom will be swept away by the wind.” Dhorme, Job, 223. As ideal as it would be to continue the botanic imagery in this context, Dhorme does not explain how the MT could have arrived at its current form through appealing to the OG.

385 For example, Habel states, “(t)his verse seems inconsistent with the plant life imagery in the surrounding verses and would appear to fit better with v. 35.” Habel, Job, 248.
metaphorical rhetoric and expresses what appears to be a wisdom adage intending to dissuade someone from trusting in something. Yet, who is Eliphaz addressing, and in what should they not trust, and why?

In context, it appears as though Eliphaz addresses the unspecified tree of v. 30 which he has presented to resemble the wicked. What has caused interpreters problems is Eliphaz’s apparent departure from the metaphorical realm to state what appears to be an unrelated and trite proverbial statement. Evidently, Eliphaz states in v. 30 that those who depend upon worthlessness deceive themselves and will receive worthlessness in exchange. The banality of this straight translation has caused Clines to say that this verse is a “feeble moralizing generality.”386 However, a more nuanced reading reveals the connection between all of the lines of v. 30 as well as demonstrates a connection to the botanic imagery before and after the verse.

It is clear that Eliphaz is presenting a strong appeal by usage of the prohibitive particle אֵל before the jussive form יָאָמֵ.387 Yet, that which he is petitioning the wicked—who are figured as a tree—not to trust in (שָׁו) is quite ambiguous. There have been proposals to emend this word in order that it might convey what is considered to be a more appropriate meaning in this context. Notably, Dhorme references Job 20:6a (אִם-י עֲלֶה ל שָׁמ יִם שִיאוֹ) — another verse which mentions the fate of the wicked—and asserts that וֹבְשִיא “his stature” should be read in v. 31.388 Other commentators suggest that שָׁו and שָׁוְא of the following line should be understood to convey the

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386 Clines, therefore, follows Dhorme (Job, 224) and emends וֹתְמוּרָׁת to וֹזְמוּרָׁת “his vine shoots,” keeping with botanic imagery. Job 1–20, 344, 362. Dhorme not only suggest that this word was originally וֹתְמוּרָׁת but also, that it did not belong to v. 31 but rather began v. 32—an assertion for which he relies on the OG (הַ תוּפי τοῦ αὐτοῦ). Dhorme notes that the Greek word for the translated Hebrew word in this context is τούμα which is rendered as זָמִיר in Song 2:12.
387 GKC §109c(b)
388 Dhorme, Job, 224.
same thing. For example, Tur-Sinai states that שָׁוְא is an alternate spelling of שָׁוָא and bears the same meaning which he translates as “frustration.”

Amos Hakham notes that most commentators, like Tur-Sinai, read שָׁוְא as essentially synonymous terms. However, he also perceives that it is possible to read שָׁוְא in v. 31a as being derived from the root שוה. That is to say, שָׁוְא would be derived from the same grammatical pattern in which שָׁוְא is derived from שָׁוְא. Were this the etymology of the word, it would then be defined as, "שוה...דוגר משוה לשני, חליפתו: חליפה.”

There are several advantages to this reading. Initially, reading שָׁוְא as “exchange” reveals the parallelism between שָׁוְא and תְמוּרָה “exchange” — another word which is often emended or moved for the sake of making this verse better fit the botanical motif. Additionally, this reading preserves a poetic play on words between שָׁוְא and שָׁוְא. These words have the same phonetic value and, upon hearing them, the listener would assume they are the same word. However, the trained reader would notice the orthographical difference and, thereby, the lexical difference.

The most significant outcome of this reading is that it shows the connection between this verse, its immediate context, and the context of the dialogues. In Job’s previous speech, he alludes to the hope of a tree, commenting that if it were cut down, it would exchange its ruined state for renewal (אִם יִכָּרֵת וְעוֹד יִחְלִיף). This reinvigorated tree flourishes and produces shoots (vv. 7 , 9). In Job 15:30-31 Eliphaz alludes to Job’s rhetoric, and reuses his tree metaphor to reiterate that

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389 Tur-Sinai, Job, 258-59.  
390 “Equivalence, a thing that is identical to something else, that is to say: its substitute.” Hakham, Job, 120, n. 38. Seow also sees two different roots in 31a, yet defines שָׁוְא ( thưא) as “yield” in light of the arboreal metaphor of Hos 10:1 (אֲשֶׁר שָׁוְא, יְשַׁוֵּא). Through this meaning, Seow sees the retribution principle of reaping and sowing in which Eliphaz reiterates his earlier point in 4:8. Seow, Job 1-21, 707, 724.  
391 BDB, 558, HALOT, 1747.  
392 Tur-Sinai repoints as תִּתְמוֹרָה “his palm tree” which serves as the subject for the following verse. It is the palm tree that will wither in v. 32. “The idea is—in continuation of the elusive wealth of the wicked mentioned before—that of a deceptive tree, a tree planted and cared for in vain, that brings no fruit.” Tur-Sinai, Job, 259. Clines notes that making the palm tree the possession of the wicked does not seem to fit the context of Job because the wicked are constantly depicted as the plants and not having the plants. Clines states, “since the wicked man is a plant, he cannot ‘have’ a palm-tree.” Clines, Job 1-20, 344.  

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there is indeed no hope for the tree (i.e. wicked). The tree is stuck in darkness and destined for punishment (v. 30). The wicked—the tree in v. 31—should not lead themselves astray by trusting in the exchange (יִאמֶנָב וַתְּמוּרָה) that Job claims for the tree. Indeed, Eliphaz claims, worthlessness is the exchange of the tree (וֹתִיתֶה תְמוּרָה). 393

3.5.3 Unfruitful Outcomes—vv. 32-33

Understanding how v. 31 continues the tree metaphor within Eliphaz’s speech is crucial in grasping the sense of v. 32a, which is a general statement of Eliphaz’s confidence that the things he previously mentioned will come to pass. The usage of the impersonal third person feminine singular (אֲמֵן בַּשָּׁוְאַת) “it will be accomplished” expresses something that is expected to happen in the future. 394 These calamities, Eliphaz claims in v. 31, are sure to come upon the tree alluded to in v. 30. The tree has no hope for renewal and is destined for retribution. Eliphaz proceeds to claim that before his time (כִּפָּת וֹוָלֶא), it will be accomplished. The wicked will be brought to their end suddenly and prematurely. 396

In the following lines, Eliphaz elaborates upon this retribution by resuming the overt usage of plant imagery—again recalling Bildad’s metaphor of 8:11-15. The tree, which is implied in v. 30, suffers its own physical demise coupled with the inability to properly reproduce. It is unproductive and moribund because it is deprived of the life-giving source that facilitates growth. Therefore, its branches never flourish (כִּפָּת וֹוָלֶא). This is in direct contrast to those healthy plants that are close to their life source and therefore produce leaves and bountiful fruit as alluded

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393 Hakham, Job, 120, n. 38.
394 See, for example, Ezek 12:25 עֹד לֹא תִמָּשֵׁךְ אֲדֹנָיו דָּבָּר וְיֵעָשֶה. Cf. GKC §144b.
395 See the comparable biblical phrases Eccl 7: 17 כִּפָּת וֹוָלֶא and Lev 15:25 נִדָּתָהּ בְּלֹא עֶת which suggest that an event will come to pass before its appointed time. Cf. also the comparable Akkadian phrase ina la ʿumīšu as well as other ancient Near Eastern parallels in Tur-Sinai, Job 259, Dhorme, Job, 225, Seow, Job 1-21, 725.
396 Clines, Job 1-20, 363.
397 Reading כִּפָּת as a collective. Seow, Job 1-21, 725.
to in Jer 17:5-10. In particular, Jeremiah states that the healthy tree always has green leaves
(עָׁלֵהוּ ר עֲנָׁן [17:8]), imagery also found in Ps 92:15, which likens the godly to flourishing (רַעֲנָנָה) trees. This Psalm, however, provides further insight into the meaning of the botanical metaphor in that the source of the growth of formidable trees (תָׁמָר and אֶרֶז [v. 13]) is clearly stated. The trees “who” flourish and increase in stature (יִפְרָח and יִשְגֶּה) are planted in the house of God (בְבֵית יְהוָה [v. 14]).

Thus, this metaphor of the tree makes being prosperous contingent upon proper religious worship. Since the wicked rebel against God (15:25-26), and strive to be prosperous by their own strength (15:27), Eliphaz depicts them far from the true life source—authentic worship of God—and thus, unproductive and dying. Since the wicked are not true worshippers of God, they wither for lack of nourishment and are never able to flourish as they might have been able, were they properly rooted. In v. 20 Eliphaz claims that the days of the evil-doer are indeed numbered. Now Eliphaz is illustrating how his days come to an end.

This image of the languishing plant is continued in v. 33, in which two plants are not able to properly mature their produce. Initially, the wicked are likened to a vine that is able to produce grapes, but divests itself of its own unripe fruit (וֹיֵחַ מִנָּה גֶפֶן בִּסְר). Then the wicked are depicted as a deficient olive tree, which, like the vine, is fruitful for a period but eventually casts off its own blossoms (כָּלִית נְצָה).

Yet, Eliphaz’s claim in this verse adds another dimension to the suffering of the wicked. The loss of the plant’s own fruit testifies not only to the wicked suffering the consequences of their

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398 See the treatment Jer 17:5-10 in conjunction with Bildad’s speech in chapter 8 in section 2.4.2.
399 This is in contrast to the wicked who sprout up like a weed and flourish for a moment only to be annihilated forever (בִּפְרֹח רְשָׁעִים כָּמוֹ עֵשֶב וְיָּצִי [Ps 92:7])
400 Hakham, Job, 121.
401 I read the jussive כָּלִית נְצָה as an imperfect that is either a true jussive intended as an imperfect, or an original imperfect misunderstood as a jussive form. GKC §109k. Dhorme suggests that this is poetic usage of the jussive instead of the imperfect as in 27:22. Dhorme, Job, 225.
own actions, but also to the suffering of their offshoots. Some commentators understand this to be a reference to the children of the wicked, suggesting that the loss of the children is a consequence of wickedness. Given Job’s loss of children, this certainly seems a plausible understanding in light of Bildad’s claim that Job’s children died because of their misdeeds (8:4). It is also possible that the imagery of the withering plant (v. 32b) that removes its own unripe fruit (v. 33), intends to illustrate that the wicked’s own detrimental actions prohibit them from ever truly being productive and prosperous.

3.6 Godless: Sterile Procreators—vv. 34-35

3.6.1 Divine Judgment upon the Wicked Leaving them Sterile and Destitute—v. 34

Eliphaz begins his concluding statements concerning the tragic fate of the wicked by declaring a two-fold punishment upon the blasphemer. Eliphaz states, in v. 34, that the company of the godless suffer from sterility (לְמוּד עֲד ת חָׁנֵף). This phrase resumes the theme concerning the iniquity of the wicked bringing suffering upon others. According to Eliphaz, the godless and their associates are doomed to infertility, which is a sign of divine judgment in the Bible.

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402 See Hakham, Job, 121.
403 Hartley, Job, 254, n. 34. See also Bildad’s exposition of the wicked falling prey to their own counsel in 18:7-10 treated in chapter 4.
404 The primary meaning of certainty modifies an object that is barren. Dhorme suggests that this phrase transcends the straightforward notion of barrenness stating that “(w)hat is implied is not merely lack of offspring, but also in general privation of the goods of this earth.” Dhorme, Job, 226. Sterility was clearly viewed as a contemptible status, not only in the Bible, but also in Mesopotamia. For example, Bottéro observes that within the Mesopotamian marriage union, “(t)he procreative purpose of this union was so essential that the sterility of the woman constituted sufficient reason for the husband to repudiate her, at least if she did not provide him with a replacement who would put into the world children that she would consider her own, without changing her position towards her husband in the least.” Bottéro, Mesopotamia, 186.
405 Whether the phrase refers to the family of the wicked (Seow [referencing Rambam], Job, 707), or a band of evil-doers (Dhorme, Job, 226), the point remains that others reap consequences of the transgressions of the godless.
406 Cf. Gen 20:18 in which the God of Israel closes the womb as a punishment. See further treatment of this theme and an analysis of Bildad’s comments regarding offspring in chapter 4.
However, the consequence alluded to in v. 34a is multifaceted. Greenstein, in his analysis of the word גּ לְמוּד in 3:7, suggests that the substantive גּ לְמוּד carries the primary sense of “sterile earth,” but can also adopt a secondary sense of a “solitary crag.”\[^{407}\] This suggestion is based upon a philological comparison of גּ לְמוּד with the related Arabic cognate noun julmūd which can refer to a lone crag or boulder.\[^{408}\] Taking this into consideration, Eliphaz could very well be uttering a double entendre in his assertion of the fate of the cohort of the godless. Not only will the godless and their comrades be like the sterile earth, but they will also suffer alienation, being likened to a completely isolated rock. The miscreant (חָׁנֵף) is explicitly identified and is doomed to be unfruitful, along with all others who are affected by his immorality. They cannot reproduce and likewise experience severe isolation, which recalls the solitude alluded to in vv. 23 and 28.

The godless are then, in v. 34b, depicted as those who dwell in tents of dishonest gain (אָׁהֳלֵי שֹחָד). This is to say, the wicked obtain wealth by means of financial impropriety—a common theme in wisdom literature.\[^{409}\] Eliphaz introduces the idea of the tent (אֹהֶל) as the dwelling place (5:24), and it is correspondingly used by Bildad (8:22), as well as Zophar (11:14). Through these references, the symbol of a tent as a microcosm of the nature of one’s life emerges.\[^{410}\] This symbolism continues throughout Job where it is used to characterize human life (18:6, 14, 15; 20:26).\[^{411}\] Thus, it seems that those who are dwellers in the tents of bribery are the ones who practice a lifestyle of financial corruption. Tents of bribery carries the “suggestion that the wealth


\[^{409}\] This point is further explored below in the discussion of chapter 20 in which Zophar focuses upon the consequences of those who attain ill-gotten gain.

\[^{410}\] Cf. 5:24, where Eliphaz suggests that Job’s would be at peace if he were not to sin. Bildad remarks in 8:22 that tent of the wicked is no more—presumably destroyed. Zophar implies that if evil dwells in the tent of the wicked, then those who dwell in the tent are wicked 11:14.

\[^{411}\] Wilson, *Job*, 196.
the wicked man enjoys has been gained unjustly, by either the giving or the acceptance of bribes to pervert justice.”

Retribution against this type of financial impropriety is justified in accordance with biblical principles in that acts of bribery were explicitly prohibited in ancient Israel. Bribery was forbidden in the Torah (e.g., Exod 23:8 [שֹחַ דֹּאִךְ לֹא תִקָּח] and Deut 16:19 [לֹא-שֹחַ דֹּאִךְ לֹא תִקָּח]), as well as strictly condemned by Israel’s prophets. For example, Isaiah denounces the שֹחַ דֹּאִךְ in 1:23, and Micah indicted the leaders whose judgment is influenced by bribery (רָאשֵׁי בּשֹחַ ד נַעֲשֶׂה [3:11]). Additionally, the Writings indicate that this type of financial impropriety is a characteristic of wickedness. Psalm 26:10 simply depicts an evildoer as one whose hand is full of שֹחַ ד, and Prov 17:23 straightforwardly calls those who take bribes wicked (רָשָׁע יִקָּח שֹחַ ד מֵחֵק).

Thus, Eliphaz’s rhetoric comports with the biblical language and belief that obtaining dishonest gain is immoral and worthy of judgment.

Eliphaz’s corresponding assertion concerning retribution coming upon the wicked in the form of fire in v. 34 parallels the usage of fire as divine judgment. An illustrative example is the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, where the God of Israel is the agent who executes divine judgment upon the cities by means of fire and brimstone (וַיִּטְמֵר...נָשִׁיר וַאֵש [Gen 19:24]). Additionally, it was the Lord’s fire (אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁפָּט...אֵשָׁה) that burned the outskirts of the camp as divine judgment for the people’s complaining during the wilderness wanderings (Num 11:1). Isaiah envisions fire as divine judgment in an eschatological vision (בָּאֵש יְהוָּה נִשְּפָּט [66:16]), whereas on the occasion of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, fire from heaven was divine judgment upon those who were not worshippers of the God of Israel (2 Kgs 1:10-14).

412 Rowley, Job, 115.
413 Dhorme, Job, 226.
414 Hartley, Job, 254, n. 35.
Perhaps the most conspicuous reference to fire is in the prologue of the book of Job. As Job receives the tragic news concerning his property and his servants, a messenger arrives and communicates to him that a fire of God fell from the heavens (אֵש אֱלֹהִים נָפְלָה מִן-הָשָׁמָיִם) and consumed Job’s flocks and servants (1:16). The fire of God, understood as a form of judgment in the Bible, is directly responsible for depriving Job of his servants and possessions during the prologue. Along these lines, and within the biblical context, it is reasonable to understand Eliphaz’s reference to fire as a suggestion that Job has already, perhaps, suffered divine judgment in the utter destruction of his household through the fire of God.

### 3.6.2 Reverse Reproduction: The Wicked Spawn Suffering and Deceit—v. 35

At the conclusion of his harangue about the tragic fate of the wicked, Eliphaz utters an apparently well-known adage (וְיָלֹד אָׁוֶן הָׁרֹה עָׁמָׁל) summarizing the need for retribution upon the wicked. Though Eliphaz claims that the congregation of the godless are barren (v. 34a), he is quick to apply two verbs associated with fertility (וְיָלֹד “to conceive” and וְיָרֹה “to bear”) to the wicked in seemingly incongruous lines (compare 34a and 35a). These paradoxical lines suggest that the infertility of the wicked indicated in v. 34 does not refer to the inability to reproduce anything. These contrasting metaphors, in fact, ascribe the ability to procreate to the sterile and childless. The irony in this verse is glaring: though the wicked are barren and thereby doomed to

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416 Cf. Isa 59:4 (חָרָה שָׁקֶר וְיָלֹד אָוֶן) and Ps 7:14 (חָרָה שָׁקֶר וְיָרֹה אָוֶן) whose rhetoric is nearly identical to Job 15:35a (חָרָה שָׁקֶר וְיָלֹד אָוֶן).
417 Pope, *Job*, 120.
418 *BDB*, 247.
419 *BDB*, 408. Dhorme (citing *GKC* §113ff) suggests that the infinitives are used here to project greater vividness. Dhorme, *Job*, 226-27. The infinite absolute is also occasionally used as a finite verb in proverbial sayings (Cf. Prov 15:22 and Isa 42:20). See *IBHS* §35.5.2(a).
die without natural progeny, they regularly conceive trouble (עָׁמָׁל), resulting in the birth of contemptible offspring (עָׁמָׁל).\footnote{Clines, Job 1-20, 363-64. Hakham reads this verse in conjunction with vv. 32, 34 and reads a reference to the wicked not being able to produce children to carry on their name. Hakham, Job, 122.}

Whereas through natural conception, offspring is generated in the womb and then birthed, Eliphaz introduces the generation of the progeny in the bellies of the wicked (v. 35b) after discussing its ultimate development (v. 35a). The wombs of the wicked fashion and ultimately bring about deceit (תָׁכִין מִרְמָׁה וּבִטְנָם). That is, in the wicked’s innermost parts, especially where people cannot see, they perpetually spawn deceit.

Eliphaz had formerly mentioned that those who plow iniquity would sow trouble (עָׁמָל and עָׁמָל [4:8]). In the same speech, Eliphaz declared the sources of evil and travail and asserted that humans were born into trouble ([עָׁמָל וּעָׁמָל] 5:6-7). Now, Eliphaz steps up the implications of his rhetoric to claim that the wicked harm others and, ultimately, themselves. The womb of the wicked is perilous, their conception is distress, and their progeny is falsehood. The wicked themselves bear these offences which eventually return upon them. The torment of the wicked is self-inflicted by reason of them conceiving and birthing the instruments of their own destruction.\footnote{The word כוֹנֶנָּה does not mean “to prepare” in this case, but “to bring about” as it is used in Isa 45:18 in parallel to the verb השׁא. See also Jer 10:12 and 51:15 where in both of these verse God is depicted as bringing forth the earth by his wisdom (וֹמַר וָמֵכִין תֵבֵל בְחָׁכְמָּה). See Seow, Job 1-21, 727.}

3.7 Conclusion

The imagery of the fate of the wicked illustrated in Job 15 depicts Eliphaz instructing Job concerning God’s moral order. The harsh end of the wicked illustrated by Eliphaz manifestly lacks the compassion of the indirect rhetoric of his first speech. Eliphaz is painting an unambiguous portrait within the paradigm of just retribution of those who do not honor God, and his words can

\footnote{Clines, Job 1-20, 365.}
certainly be understood to present a warning for the godless. Yet, how does Eliphaz’s warning and persistence in upholding just retribution relate to Job?

All things considered, it appears that Eliphaz is providing Job, at the bare minimum, a strong warning, and might be prepared to include him among the wicked. Through vivid imagery relating to darkness, botany, fatness, and sterility, Eliphaz ostensibly reveals to Job that he is, by and large, suffering the fate of the wicked, and that God is disclosing Job’s secret impiety through his misfortune. Job once lived as though he were not wicked, but now God is removing his pious façade, exposing him and making a public display of him.423

Concerning the imagery Eliphaz uses to present the wicked, Wilson comments that, “(a)ll of these elements of the description of the wealthy wicked resonate clearly with the early picture of the blessed state of Job before the advent of his suffering (1:1-3). Eliphaz is informing Job, rather blatantly, that his great personal loss places him (in his friend’s view) squarely in the category of the wicked described in these verses.”424 Though it is moot whether Job is considered wicked by Eliphaz, it does seem reasonable to suggest that his comments locate Job within the sphere of wickedness and en route to experiencing the consequences of wicked behavior. Thus, it is difficult to argue that Eliphaz does not at least have Job in mind throughout his speech. His allusions are too specific to Job’s situation. Amos Hakham also concludes, “אף אל פי שאולфессמר "אך אל פי שאולфессמר..." אוף בהליך, זאור שבח חמה והברחים שקבלו חוכמם מאבותם,ndlמונריו רמתו לאור ונטך, ספיל נתונים יהודה זלב ילב...".425

425 “Even though Eliphaz is speaking generally, and says those are the things that the wise received from their forefathers, hints are included in his words toward Job himself, who according to his opinion [Eliphaz’s] lived all the days of his live in deception, pretending that he was a God-fearer, but with rebellious thoughts in his heart.” Hakham, *Job*, 122.
There must be at least something in Job’s heart, or thoughts in Job’s mind, that are causing this turmoil in his life (v. 12), according to Eliphaz. Job may or not be wicked at this point, but Eliphaz’s rhetoric and imagery are forceful reminders to Job to mind the principles of just retribution. Job responds to Eliphaz’s view regarding the fate of the wicked (Job 16-17), yet his response only spurs Bildad to proclaim a vehement defense of the paradigm of just retribution.
4 “Woe is the Way of the Wicked”: Bildad in Chapter 18

In presenting distinct scenarios for both the righteous (8:11-15) and the wicked (8:16-22), Bildad’s first speech left open the possibility that Job could return to God and reverse his tragic situation, once again enjoying prosperity and wellness.\(^4^{26}\) If Job would simply turn back to God, Bildad claimed, the Job of the dialogues could once again be, and perhaps even surpass in greatness, the Job of the early prologue (8:5-7).

Bildad’s second speech is not so benevolent.

He commences his dialogue by mockingly inquiring as to how long it would be before Job stopped talking\(^4^{27}\) —in effect brazenly asking Job to “shut up” (v. 2).\(^4^{28}\) Job lacks intelligence, according to Bildad\(^4^{29}\) who is disturbed that, not only does Job reject his friend’s advice of admitting iniquity and repenting, but he also humiliates his companions by suggesting that they are essentially worthless, vain comforters (16:2-3). Bildad is offended that Job would dare to imply that he and his friends are misguided when, in his opinion, they are authentic sages with profound insight (v. 3, see also 8:8-10).\(^4^{30}\) Hence, Bildad, who is particularly interested in his personal standing among the wise, is insulted, and is no longer concerned with Job’s needs for

\(^{426}\) Seow, Job 1-21, 770.

\(^{427}\) Literally the difficult phrase נפשיון קִנְצֵי לְמִלִין. By Bildad asking Job if there will be an end of words in v. 2, he is apparently mocking Job’s question to his friends in 16:3 (ךָּקֵץ לְדִבְרֵי-רוּח). Bildad uses the second person plural form נפשיון קִנְצֵי clearly addressing Job and his friends, yet interpreters consistently assert that Bildad addresses only Job by appealing to the context. For example, Longman states, “(w)hile the verb indicates second-person plural, the context clearly indicates that he is speaking only to Job here.” Longman, Job, 246, n. 1. Others view this plural form to be a perfectly normal literary device. With regard to the plural form Habel states that it is “likely that Bildad is using a traditional exordium style to emphasize his sarcasm by echoing the plural language used by Job (12:2, 19:2).” Habel, Job, 280. It also may be that this line, “though directed at Job (v. 4) is couched in terms of an address to a wider audience, presumably others who are like Job.” Seow, Job 1-21, 770. The most likely option is that Bildad quotes what Job said in 16:3 (ךָּקֵץ לְדִבְרֵי-רוּח) as a frustrated response to his companions, encouraging them to regroup before continuing their argument with Job. See Edward L. Greenstein, “Job” in The Jewish Study Bible (2d ed.: eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; New York; Oxford University Press, 2014), 1489-1556, especially the note on 18:2 on p. 1521.

\(^{428}\) Wilson, Job, 193.

\(^{429}\) Ibid.

\(^{430}\) Job questions their superior intellect in 12:2-4, suggesting that is no less of a sage than them.
consolation, camaraderie, and confession.\textsuperscript{431} Job, in Bildad’s opinion, is egocentric and desires to play the role of God, reorganizing the cosmos to better suit his purposes, as though he should be the only exception to the traditional wisdom paradigm of retributive justice (v. 4).\textsuperscript{432} When Bildad is unsuccessful in persuading Job to recognize that he and his friends are sagacious counselors, he turns from humane reasoning to a harsh invective against those who refuse to turn to God.\textsuperscript{433} Concerning Bildad’s difference in tone between his first two speeches, Hartley notes, “(w)hereas in his former speech [Bildad] emphasized the possibility that Job might have a bright future, because the righteous are blessed, he now details the horrid fate that befalls the ungodly…He offers Job no hope…”\textsuperscript{434}

Thus, Bildad proceeds to illustrate the harrowing and inevitable fate of the wicked, which Job can expect by virtue of his arrogance—toward both God\textsuperscript{435} and tradition—and his refusal to admit to iniquity. In doing so, Bildad recapitulates several of his previous claims using comparable imagery (e.g. imagery of the dwelling place and the plant in chapter 8), as well as introduces distinct symbolism to vividly illustrate the fate of the wicked who turn away from God. As the speech progresses, it becomes increasingly evident that Bildad also resorts to aspects of his companions’ imagery and reiterates their argument of just retribution by utilizing this imagery to connect Job’s suffering with sin.\textsuperscript{436}

\textsuperscript{431} Andersen, \textit{Job}, 203.
\textsuperscript{432} Habel, \textit{Job}, 282, Crenshaw, \textit{Reading Job}, 100.
\textsuperscript{433} Wilson, \textit{Job}, 193.
\textsuperscript{434} Hartley, \textit{Job}, 272.
\textsuperscript{435} Habel, \textit{Job}, 283.
\textsuperscript{436} Longman, \textit{Job}, 248. See, for example, those sections treated above, in particular, 4:7-11; 8:3-4, 11-21; and 15:20-25. Additionally, Zophar touches on several of the same themes below in 20:5-29. See section 5.2.
4.1 The Light of the Wicked Will Wane—vv. 5-6, 18

4.1.1 No Light…No Life

In accordance with Bildad’s paradigm of retributive justice, which has been entrenched in tradition, he inaugurates his diatribe against the wicked by using a well-known conventional wisdom adage relating to the dichotomy of light and darkness. In vv. 5-6, Bildad depicts the wicked in the dark because their source of light is perpetually extinguished. Bildad reiterates in each of the four lines of vv. 5-6 that, even if the wicked were to strive to live in the light (אָר, אִשוׁ, נֵרוֹ,), their endeavor would fail, their light would be darkened (ךְָׁיִדְעַלֹא-יִגּחַךְ בָאָלֹֹֹהֶל), and they will abide in obscurity.

A cursory look at the usage of light and darkness in the book of Job reveals its symbolic value. Initially, Job referred to the symbolism of light/darkness in his opening curse upon the day of his birth. In this malediction, Job retroactively invokes darkness (ךְחֹשַם [vv. 4-5]) upon that day so as to never have experienced the light of life (v. 20 [רָא]). Bildad, now frustrated with Job, communicates that he has indeed earned that for which he wished. Yet, Bildad escalates Job’s language from chapter 3 and reapplies Job’s rhetoric to the fate of the wicked, suggesting that the darkness Job once wished for is the tragic end of the impious. In Job’s persistence in denying wrongdoing, he confirms his position as being numbered with the impious.

Elsewhere in Job, light resembles an attribute relating to life and/or the continuance of an enjoyable physical existence (3:9, 16, 20; 18:18; 33:28, 30; 38:15, 19). Similarly, the symbolism of light is used to refer to spiritual vitality and wisdom (22:28; 24:13, 16, 28:11; 29:3), generally

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437 Habel, Job, 281, 84. Habel even suggests that the reference to the wicked in the 3rd person masculine singular form as opposed to the generic plural is an indication of Bildad’s objective of classifying Job as wicked. However, it is also possible that the possessive pronoun in פֵּשָּׂף refers to the wicked as a collective. Accordingly, the wicked are collectively referred to in the singular for the duration of the chapter, despite the initial reference to the wicked (רְשָׁעִים) being in the plural. Additionally, the language could simply be reflective of a citation of a common proverb as in Prov 13:9. Hakham, Job, 138.
bestowed upon the righteous. Darkness, on the other hand, is frequently symbolic of the underworld and death (3:4-5; 10:21; 15:22-23, 30; 17:13; 18:18; 20:26), as well as a lack of wisdom/guidance (5:14; 12:25; 19:8; 22:11; 29:3; 38:2).\(^\text{438}\) Though Bildad depicts a living person in 18:5-6, he suggests that their habitation falls under the dominion of death as the light of their abode diminishes.\(^\text{439}\) Once again, Bildad upholds what his companion Eliphaz has already claimed (15:22) in that the wicked are bound for darkness, which manifests itself during their increasingly deteriorating life. Bildad further intensifies his rhetoric and clarifies the grim fate of the wicked in v. 18. The wicked ultimately meet their death by being pushed out of the realm of light and into the dominion of darkness (וּיֶהְדְפֻה מֵאוֹר אֶל-חֹשֶךְ). Bildad proposes a complete eradication of the wicked from the populated world (וּוּמִתֵבֵל יְנִדֻה) resulting in their arrival into a realm in which they are deprived of light.

### 4.1.2 Light/Life/Land vs. Darkness & Death in the Bible

Bildad’s warning regarding the expulsion of the wicked evokes the Pentateuchal admonition to Israel of obedience to the Law of God, and the repercussion of being removed from the land (Deut 28:58, 63). Additionally, Jeremiah prophesies that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would attack Judah and exile its inhabitants because of their disobedience (25:5-11). As a result of this exile, says the prophet, God will put an end to everyday life in the land. There will be no more sounds of joy and gladness, marriage celebrations will cease, and the millstone will no longer be

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\(^{438}\) There is a general consensus amongst the commentators regarding the symbolic value of the light/darkness polarity symbolizing life/death. For example, Longman states, “[Bildad] begins by using the metaphor of the light (vv. 5-6), which here symbolizes life and health and prosperity, over against darkness, which represents the opposite: death, sickness, and failure.” Longman,Job, 250. Hartley notes the significance of the light/darkness metaphor specifically in relation to the doctrine of retribution in Job stating, “The doctrine of retribution is often illustrated by the metaphors of light and darkness. Light is symbolic of life (3:20), wealth (22:38), and happiness; conversely, darkness represents loss (15:30), sadness, and death (3:5).” Hartley,Job, 275. See also Seow,Job 1-21,773-74.

\(^{439}\) Habel,Job, 286.

\(^{440}\) The unexpected 3rd person plural forms (וּיֶהְדְפֻה and וּיְנִדֻה) in v. 18 can be accounted for as expressing an indefinite subject which can be rendered in the passive voice. GKC §144g. See also Dhorme, 267-68; Pope,Job, 136.
employed. This dissolution of normal activity is depicted as a type of death coming upon the land. In this manner, it is appropriate that Jeremiah uses the light/darkness metaphor in reference to the land asserting that God will extinguish the light of its lamp (וְאוֹר נֵר [25: 10]).

This notion of being uprooted as judgment for disobedience continues as a motif throughout biblical wisdom literature and poetry. The Deuteronomistic affirmation that only the righteous inhabit the land is echoed in Prov 2:21-22 (כִי-יְשָׁרִים יִשְכְנוּ אָרֶץ), in which the wicked are explicitly depicted as being cut off from the earth (רְשָׁעִים כָּרֵתוּ). In Ps 52:5-7 God expels those who love lies more than truth from the land of the living (כִי רְשָׁעִים תִכָּרֵתוּ). The lover of evil is not only removed from the land of the living, but God is the enforcer of the retribution, pulling the wicked down forever (עִלָּיִית לְגָנָה).

Further examination of Proverbs demonstrates that light/dark imagery depicts life and death in a sense that is particularly relevant to Job 18:5-6, 18. Using nearly identical terminology to Job 18:5-6, Prov 13:9 states that the light of the righteous shines while the lamp of the wicked wanes (וְאֵלֶּה אוֹר צִדְקֵים יִשְמָּח וְנֵר רְשָׁעִים יִדְעָךְ). That is to say, the life of the righteous person will be happy, but the life of the wicked will be dismal. Proverbs 20:20, recalling the Pentateuchal appeal to honor one’s father and mother (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16), asserts that the one who curses his/her parents will suffer the waning of one’s lamp in darkness (וֹיְדַעְךְ נֵר בְאָדָם חֹשֶךְ). This fate plainly coincides with the death penalty as the requirement of the Mosaic Law for the offense of dishonoring one’s father and mother (i.e. Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9; Deut 27:16). Indeed, the metaphor of the fading lamp portrays the end of the wicked, which is demonstrated through the illustrative, yet understandable rhetoric of Prov 24:20 (לָא-חָרִית לַרְשָׁעִים נֵר וְרְשָׁעִים יִדְעֲךָ).

441 See also Ps 49:20, in which the dead are depicted as those who not see light again (כִי לֹא יִרְאוּ אוֹר).
Not only do these verses suggest a common wisdom expression, but they express the same understanding regarding the judgment of the wicked Bildad alludes to in Job 18:5-6, 18. The wicked receive their just retribution by way of their imminent death. Through their impending death, they are transferred from a realm of light into a realm of darkness.

4.1.3 Darkness & Death in Ancient Near Eastern Literature

Ancient Near Eastern literature interestingly depicts the realm of the dead (i.e. the netherworld) as consisting of darkness. The belief that darkness is a primary characteristic of the netherworld may have come about by transposing comprehensible images in observable realms, to those things about which the ancient Near Easterners had no tangible evidence. An example of this in the ancient Near East and the Bible relates to the postmortem experience, in which the afterlife was spent in the lurking subterranean realm of the dead—an abode devoid of light.

4.1.3.1 The Ballad of Early Rulers

In addition to the Mesopotamian understanding of the underworld as a dark place, it appears as though the notion of darkness was also understood to imply death in general. The Ballad of Early Rulers, which is a composition that emphasizes the sovereignty of Ea in determining all fates, affirms the ephemeral nature of human life and refers to the impending death of all humans. It is, therefore, best to enjoy the present time before the arrival of death, according

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Pope, Job, 134.
Bottéro, Mesopotamia, 276-77.
Manuscripts of the Ballad were found at Emar and Ugarit although the composition likely originated in Mesopotamia. It was written in syllabic Sumerian, Sumerian, and Akkadian, and the dates of the authorship of the extant copies range from the mid-2nd to 1st millennia B.C.E. Cohen, Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age, 129. The specific recension of the version of the composition will be cited each time the Ballad is quoted in this work.
to the composition. In this context, a line from *The Ballad of Early Rulers* lends insight into how the imagery of light relates to life, and by implication, death:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>balāṭu ša lā namāri</th>
<th>“Life without light—how can it be better than death?” Line 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ana mūti mīna utter</td>
<td>Line 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above passage, life is considered fruitful in the presence of light, whereas life without light is grim. Thus, light and darkness symbolically relate to one’s quality of life. The ultimate deprivation of light leads one to the rationale that one might be better off dead.

### 4.1.3.2 The Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld and Nergal and Ereshkigal

An interesting description of the realm of the dead from Akkadian literature comes from *The Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld*. In this composition, the goddess Ishtar arrives at the underworld and demands admittance. The following lines provide a description of Ishtar’s determination to arrive and a summary of the netherworld:

To the netherworld, the land of no return,
Ishtar, daughter of Sin, set her mind.
Indeed, the daughter of Sin did set her mind
To the gloomy house, the seat of the netherworld,
To the house that none leaves who enters,
To the road whose journey had no return,
To the house whose entrants are bereft of light,
Where dust is their sustenance and clay their food.
They see no light but dwell in darkness...

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445 Ibid., 144. Though this text does broach the aforementioned serious themes, it very well may contain a hint of humor with the intent of entertaining other scribes. As Alster states, the text is a “humorous play with literary allusions in a joyous academic society.” Alster, *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer*, 297.

446 For a discussion relating to how the Akkadian term *nawāru* “to brighten” can be metaphorically used to refer to someone’s countenance of mood, see Alster, *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer*, 310-11. In this manner, the idea of light being associated with happiness and the absence of light being associated with distress corresponds to the biblical symbolism.


A few observations can be readily noted relating to this composition’s depiction of the realm of the dead in relation to the imagery presented in Job. This composition characterizes those who are in the realm of the dead as being in their “house.” It is the inhabitant’s dwelling place that is deprived of light (lines 4, 7). Not only does their dwelling lack light, but the inhabitants of the netherworld are depicted as being without proper sustenance (line 8).

The same imagery of the underworld occurs in the Standard Babylonian version of *Nergal and Ereshkigal* in which Nergal visits the netherworld with the intent of usurping the throne of Ereshkigal:

To the netherworld, Land of No Return,  
Nergal set his mind…  
To the **gloomy house**, seat of the netherworld,  
To the **house** that none leaves who enters,  
To the road whose journey has no return,  
To the **house** whose entrants are **beriff of light**,  
Where the dust is their **sustenance** and clay their food…  
...**They see no light but dwell in darkness**...  

In this composition, the underworld is depicted as a house where the inhabitants are deprived of light and sustenance. The rhetoric concerning the light/darkness polarity, lack of sustenance, and habitation in *The Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld* and *Nergal and Ereshkigal* is similar to that used in various sections of Job concerning the ongoing state, and eventual fate, of the wicked. For instance, in Eliphaz’s second speech he claims that the wicked despair of the darkness that awaits them (15:22), and proceeds to mention that they suffer from insufficient sustenance (15:23). Eliphaz previously suggested a lack of sustenance for the wicked, though subtly, in 4:11, when he claimed that the lion (i.e., the wicked) would perish from a lack of prey.

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449 Foster, *Before the Muses*, 499. See also COS, 1:381-384.  
450 Bold and italics mine. Foster, *Before the Muses*, 516. See also COS, 1:384-389.
As mentioned above, Bildad picks up on the illustration of the wicked being deprived of light and adds that this darkness comes upon their habitation (18:5-6). Ultimately, the wicked are completely deprived of light through being forced into the netherworld (18:18). In this manner, according to Bildad, the wicked endlessly dwell in darkness. Initial darkness comes to pass while the wicked are still living, through the expectation of their demise. This expectation is subsequently fulfilled through their expulsion from the realm of light into the world of darkness. Bildad maintains that the wicked are deprived of light in their own habitation, are consequently deprived of all light in the land of the living, and are eventually fated for the realm of darkness. Thus to Bildad, a dwelling place without light essentially announces death which is culminated through the loss of life.

4.2 The Way of the Wicked—vv. 7-10

In the previous verses, Bildad described the fate of the wicked as they were stationary in their habitations. In Job 18:7-10, Bildad moves on to illustrate the wicked in motion. Regardless of whether the wicked remain in their houses or strive to move along in their paths, they meet an awful demise. In vv. 8-10 Bildad uses six different expressions for an entrapment of the feet (רֶשֶת, שְבָׁכָה, פָח, צִמִים, טָוּם, מְלַכְתָה, סָכָה, טָכָה)\(^{451}\) to illustrate that in the journey of the wicked they encounter a sudden, unexpected, and imminent halt\(^{452}\) as a result of their own schemes.

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\(^{451}\) For varying descriptions of the significance of the words of the different traps and their appearance in other biblical literature, see Hartley, *Job*, 276; Longman, *Job*, 250.

\(^{452}\) Hartley, *Job*, 275-76. Concerning these traps pointing to the inevitability of a tragic end for the wicked Clines states, “(t)his depiction of the snares laid for the wicked has the impact of representing him as perpetually surrounded by danger. While he lives, he lives a charmed life, but at any moment one of the traps will spring and his life will be over.” Clines, *Job* 1-20, 415.
The terminology relating to traps for the feet symbolically relates human conduct, while the allusion to their path exhibits the type of life one lives. Tremper Longman III explains, “(w)isdom’s main metaphor for life is a path. The wise walk on the straight, well-lit, smooth path that leads to life, while the wicked walk on the twisty path that is dark and filled with all kinds of calamities…In this path, the wicked hurt themselves.” Thus in their way, the wicked’s own feet guide them into traps, leading to their downfall. The Bible mentions that only those who are properly guided by wisdom (Prov 4:12), and God (Ps 18:37; 2 Sam 22:37) can negotiate the traps and be successful.

The metaphorical unit regarding the faltering of the wicked is introduced with an ambiguous phrase concerning their steps (וּיֵצְרֵי אוֹנוֹ [v. 7]). The mention of the steps in this line hints at the idea that the wicked’s path is being addressed. Bildad has already stated that the wicked come to a dreadful end (vv. 5-6). This is also what v. 7b indicates in stating that the wicked will fall because of their own schemes (וֹעֲצָׁת וְתָשִׁיכֵה). It is preferable to understand 7a in this same light, making it unlikely that Bildad is simply communicating the weakening of the wicked’s

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453 Prov 1:16 (וכִּלְגָּלְסִים עַל יִזְרֵי וּרְפָאִים לָשׁוֹפָה) supports the idea that activity relating to the feet can metaphorically serve to indicate one’s way of living.
454 Longman, Job, 250.
455 Pope, Job, 134. See similarly Ps 37:15, where the wicked bring destruction upon themselves by their swords piercing their own hearts (קָרֹץ וְמֵא בַּפֶּרֶב).
456 Seow, Job 1-21, 774-75.
457 Many commentators emend the verb וּתָשִׁיכֵה suggesting that the verb’s consonants may have been reversed during transmission. Thus, v. 7b would read along the lines of “his own counsel causes him to stumble.” This is seemingly how the text was understood by the OG (σφάλαι δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐν βουλή). There appears to be further corroboration for this reading in Prov 4:12 (וְאִם תָּרוּץ לֹא תִכָּשֵׁלָה), as well as Ps 64:9 (וְוֹקִיצֵהוּ עָלָיו לְשֵׁנָם). Though there is a strong argument for emendation, the solution is not as straightforward as it appears. The OG could sensibly support this reading with וּתָשִׁיכֵה as well if the interpreter understood וֹוְתָשִׁיכֵהוּ עֲצָׁת “his counsel will cast him down” to signify the comparable phrase, “his counsel will cause him to fall.” The OG supports the latter reading. Seow, Job 1-21, 782-83.
strength. Rather, it is preferable to understand the hurtful steps of the wicked. If this is the meaning, vv. 8-10 then read as a further elaboration upon stopping the wicked in their proverbial tracks.

The godless’ primary stumbling block is their own counsel. Regardless of how hard the wicked strive to increase in wisdom, they remain foolhardy. Lacking acumen, it is precisely their own counsel that causes them to fall into traps. Understanding Bildad’s depiction of these stumbling imprudent counselors is improved by observing how other immoral people use these types of traps in the Bible.

In Ps 9:16-17, the nations are depicted as falling prey to the various entrapments that they themselves had concealed for others (v. 5b). The psalmist proceeds to straightforwardly declare that the wicked being caught in their own traps (v. 17b) is a direct act of justice by the God of Israel (v.17a). This justice is appealed to in Ps 140:5-6, where the psalmist pleads for the protection of the Lord from the wicked to cause the worshipper to falter. However, the psalmist appeals to God to enact justice as his recourse against this trickery (Ps 140:6-13).

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458 There are legitimate differing interpretations concerning how the word relates to the path of the wicked. Many commentators relate the word to “strength” deriving from אֹוֹנ “vigor, wealth.” For example, Pope states that this verse illustrates, “an aging man whose once mighty stride is reduced to a feeble hobble.” Pope, Job, 134. Clines, on the other hand, translates as "steps of his strength." Clines, Job 1-20, 405. See also Hakham, Job, 139. Seow, however, recognizes the ambivalence in the phrase which he states can refer to “the arrogant self-confidence (‘his vigorous step’) and the iniquitous conduct (‘his mischievous step’) of the wicked.” Seow, Job 1-21, 774-75.

459 One of the primary senses of the verb רָצֶר used intransitively in the qal paradigm relates to being restricting/binding. See BDB, 864 and HALOT, 2:1058.

460 Hakham, Job, 139-40.


462 See also Jer 48:44, in which the word פָׁח is used as a punishment of the Lord.
Using similar rhetoric to Bildad’s in 18:8-10, Pss 9:16-17 and 140:5-6 show the impious laying down traps striving to ensnare the true follower of God. Bildad pictures the wicked who devise evil machinations against the pious, recklessly tripping over their own traps and causing a precipitous end to their own life journey. Not only is the wicked tumbling over their own schemes a precursor to Bildad’s claim that they cannot enjoy their prosperity for long, but also alludes to their inevitable destruction. Bildad’s conclusion certainly coincides with the wisdom motif, which asserts that the deeds of the wicked return upon them. The question that remains is whether or not this wisdom applies to Job.

4.3 Terrors and Trouble in the Way of the Wicked—vv. 11-12

Eliphaz previously claimed that the wicked live in a perpetual state of fear and terror (15:20). Bildad demonstrates his affinity to Eliphaz’s retribution ideology by reminding Job that terrors frighten the wicked from all sides (סָׁבִיב בִּעֲתֻהוּ ב לָׁהוֹת [v. 11]), leaving them forever panicked. The rhetoric of perpetual terrors (ב לָׁהוֹת) overcoming the wicked signifies their imminent death sentence. This is clear through analyzing how ב לָׁהוֹת is used throughout Job. Terrors (ב לָׁהוֹת) overtake the wicked like water in Job 27:20a, which is another passage that relates the fate of the wicked. The significance of v. 20a is further revealed in 20b, which is a parallel statement.

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463 Hartley, Job, 276.
464 See Ps 124:7, in which the psalmist claims that Israel escapes with their lives from the snare (תָּפֵן) of their enemy. Also, in conjunction with further entrapment imagery in Prov 22:5 and 29:5, Longman suggests that all six of these traps symbolize “obstacles that threaten life to which the wicked fall prey.” Longman, Job, 250. Clines adds that the “(s)ix different words (are) being used for the trap as if to express its inescapability, the point is that—by whatever precise means—the wicked man is ensnared by death…” Clines, Job 1–20, 414-15.
465 See e.g. Prov 5:22ךְ הָׁרָׁשָׁע וּבְח בְלֵי ח טָׁאתוֹ יִתָּמֵי לַכְדֻנוֹ אֶת עֲווֹנָׁיו.
466 See section 3.1.1.
467 This word is only used in the plural in Job.
indicating the tragic fate of the wicked. The wicked are swept away by a violent storm wind (לְָלָּה). 468

The next time that ב לָׁהוֹת appears is in Job’s final discourse. In the middle of Job’s monologue, he launches into a complaint in which he recounts his mistreatment by younger men (30:1). After detailing this misconduct toward him (30:1-14), Job reflects upon his fateful situation and exclaims that terrors (ב לָׁהוֹת) are overturned upon him (30:15) 469—that is to say—Job is overwhelmed by intense fear. In agony Job cries out to God, initially receiving no response (30:20a), but subsequently being violently attacked by God (30:21b). This malicious backlash from God assures Job that God has appointed him to death (כִי-יָׁד עְתִי מָׁוֶת תְשִיבֵנִי [v. 23]). Thus, an overview of this passage suggests that those things which cause Job terror in v. 15 are used by God as harbingers of his impending and predetermined death. 470

Bildad tersely reiterates the enduring presence of the terrors in v. 11b. Alluding to the terrors (ב לָׁהוֹת) of v. 11a once again, Bildad asserts that they will be scattered about the feet of the wicked (וֶהֱפִיצֻהוּ לְר גְָלָׁיו). 471 This line implies the preceding imagery related to the feet and portrays terror causing the legs of the wicked to tremble in fear. Bildad communicates that everywhere the wicked sojourn in life, they are in fear of their premature demise. With this rhetoric, Bildad continues to emphasize death as the ultimate penalty for wickedness.

Bildad’s rhetoric continues to intensify as the images of the downfall of the wicked become ever more daunting throughout his second speech. Bildad next relates imagery implying the

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468 This wind imagery is continued in 27:21-22 to portray the wicked person’s plight in the face of their judgment.
469 See GKC §121a-b for the unusual morphology in the phrase ב לָׁהוֹת.
470 The idea that the word ב לָׁהוֹת can indicate terror associated with death is found elsewhere in the Bible. See, for example, Isa 17:14 and especially Ezek 26:21 (בָּלָּהוֹת אֶתְנֵךְ וְאֵינֵ), and Ps 73:19 (ך ב לָּהוֹת אֶלֶךֶּם מַעְסֶב עֶמְךָ בָּלָּהוֹת). Several commentators have suggested that the terrors in v. 11 should be understood as demons. See Pope, Job, 134; Hakham, Job, 140, n. 18. Though it is enticing to suppose that Bildad and Eliphaz might be referring to characters of the underworld who eventually bring the wicked to death, neither chapter 15 nor 18 explicitly confirms this theory.
471 Reading with Hakham, who argues that the verb וֶהֱפִיצֻה is used intransitively and modified by ב לָׁהוֹת Job, 140.
consumption of the wicked as a result of their iniquity in v. 12. Coinciding with the notion that the path of the wicked is laden with horror, Bildad now asserts that the (personified) trouble of the wicked is hungry (יְהִי-רָׁעֵב), seemingly lying in wait, vigilant for their slightest misstep. This threat of a looming attack is reiterated in v. 12b where Bildad claims that the disaster of the wicked is continually ready for their unavoidable fall (וֹנָכֹן לְצָל לְעִיד).

A few interpretive notes are in order with regard to the significance of v. 12. Initially, this is a notoriously difficult verse to interpret because of the anomalous usage of the jussive יְהִי at the beginning of the line, as well as the various potential interpretations of רָׁעֵב and וֹאֹנ in 11a. The verb יְהִי is jussive, but it appears as if it should be understood as an ordinary imperfect form. Though this might be the case, there is still some difficulty regarding the syntactical functions and significances of the words רָׁעֵב and וֹאֹנ. Both of these words have several meanings and both could function as the subject of the sentence. Some understand the word רָׁעֵב in its primary lexical adjectival sense, “hungry,” or with slight emendation, “hunger.” Other commentators, following the lead of Dahood, suggest that the word רָׁעֵב is an epithet for the Canaanite god Mot. For example, Pope translates רָׁעֵב in 12a as the “Ravenous One” and comments that “(t)he suggestion of Dahood is now accepted, that rāēḇ (sic), the ‘Hungry One,’ is an epithet for Mot (Death).” There is also significant disagreement among interpreters regarding the meaning of

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472 The word רָׁעֵב should be understood as coming from גָּרַע “limping, stumbling” (BDB, 854). See, for example, Ps 38:18a (כִּי-חֲפָלָה יִנְשָׁא) as well as Ps 35:15 and Jer 20:10. Clines, Job 1-20, 406.
473 GKC §109k.
474 Dhorme, Job, 263; Clines, Job 1-20, 403.
475 Ball, Job, 265; Seow, Job 1-21, 784.
476 Pope, Job, 132.
477 This is despite the fact that Mot is never given such an epithet in the Ugaritic texts. Ibid., 135. See also Habel, Job, 280, 287-88. As noted by Clines, Job 1-20, 405.
the noun וֹאֹנ which can legitimately be translated as pertaining to “vigor, power, wealth”478 or “trouble, disaster, calamity.”479

Though there are several interpretations of this passage, the prominent retribution motif of perpetual fear troubling the wicked, along with the rhetorical content of this section, help in determining the best reading of this phrase. Bildad has already touched on imagery related to darkness and how this resembles eventual death (18:5-6), as did Eliphaz (15:22). It is, therefore, not surprising that Bildad broaches the subject of the perpetual terror of the wicked as did Eliphaz (15:21). Bildad introduces this topic by using entrapment imagery that relates to feet in order to resemble the tragic path of the wicked ultimately leading to their demise (18:8-10). However, Bildad, seemingly unsatisfied with communicating merely the ultimate destiny of the wicked, expounds upon what the wicked experience in their treacherous journey. In v. 11, Bildad communicates that the wicked will experience omnipresent terrors in their lives. This claim provides the ideal context for Bildad’s next assertion in verse 12. Bildad portrays the calamity of the wicked as a ravenous entity ready to devour, and simply waiting for the wicked to stumble. This imagery regarding the consumption of the wicked is mentioned again in 18:13, which is treated below.480 However, it is reasonable to suggest at this juncture that a reading of v. 12a which understands the wicked’s trouble being eager to devour, fits into the retribution motif as well as the immediate rhetorical context of the verse.

478 BDB, 20; HALOT, 22. See Hartley, Job, 277-78; Longman, Job, 247, 250.
479 BDB, 19; HALOT, 22. See Ball, Job, 265; Clines, Job 1-20, 403. There are certainly other interpretations of this verse than those presented as the most popular options above. See, for example, Hakham, who suggests that this verse is about the coming judgment upon the wicked, their wives, and their children. Job, 140.
480 This imagery of the consumption of the wicked is amplified by Zophar in chapter 20. See chapter 5.
4.4 **Definite Death—vv. 13-14**

The persistent terror of vv. 11-12 suggests that the wicked regularly experience the consequences of their impiety but do not invariably perish at once. Bildad emphasizes that the journey of the wicked, regardless of duration, is calamitous and ends in their death. While continuing to emphasize the same retribution theology in vv. 13-14, Bildad refers to two terms which function as appellatives for entities related to the Canaanite god *Mot*. Being that these monikers would have likely been recognized in the ancient Near Eastern cognitive environment, it is important to grasp what the poet of Job may have been communicating in that milieu.

4.4.1 **The Firstborn of Death—v. 13**

Bildad continues his discourse by portraying grotesque corporeal affliction befalling the wicked. In v. 13a an unnamed creature attacks the wicked and consumes the limbs of his skin (יֹאכַל בֵּדֵי עוֹר). Bildad’s mentioning of a skin malady brings to mind the ailments of Job’s skin. Job’s skin was plagued with boils (2:7), it scabbed and cracked (7:5), and became hideous to the point at which Job complained of it turning black (30:28, 30). Thus, there is little doubt that Bildad’s description alludes to Job’s illness and relates it to a punishment that falls upon the wicked.

This allusion to Job, however, is expressed through curious rhetoric that deserves further investigation. The anomalous phrase בֵּדֵי עוֹר “limbs of his skin” suggests that the line should also be understood metaphorically. The multiple renderings of this line in the versions show that the translators had difficulty understanding the text. This confusion is reflected in more modern treatments of this verse as well. For example, Nahum Sarna notes that to “devour skin” is not a

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482 See Rowley, *Job*, 130.
natural phrase. His solution to this peculiar phrase is found in a comparison with an Ugaritic passage from *The Baal Cycle* in which *Mot* boastfully declares “With both my hands I shall eat them” (*pimt.bkl<α>t*ydy.ilḥm*).\(^{483}\) Sarna then notes that the Ugaritic uniconsonantal *d*, “hand” is apparently fossilized in the phrase *bd*, “with/in the hand.” Based upon the rhetoric of this Ugaritic passage, and the apparent fossilization of the combined *bd*, Sarna contends that the difficult words ב דֵי and ב דָּיו in v. 13 should be understood as meaning “with two hands” and “with his two hands” respectively.\(^{484}\)

A concern with this approach, however, is the seemingly liberal imposition of the Ugaritic pattern upon the Hebrew of Job. The word ב ד has intelligible Hebrew meanings which should be retained unless it is impossible to do so. The meaning of ב ד does not have to be “limb” in the strictest sense, but can also signify the part of a whole (i.e., Exod 30:34),\(^{485}\) as the limbs are an extension of the human body. Simply recognizing this meaning of ב ד eliminates the apparent need for emendation of this phrase in that ב דֵי עוֹר could refer to “parts of his skin.” This is not only a much less ambiguous phrase, but also, exposes the possibility that the phrase could be a synecdoche for the whole body.

An additional factor in understanding the significance of the phrase ב דֵי עוֹר lies in identifying the entity which devours. As mentioned above, the entity which devours is not explicitly mentioned in v. 13a. However, v. 13b states that the personified ב כוֹר מָׁוֶת (the “Firstborn

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\(^{483}\) The translation is taken from Nahum M. Sarna, "The Mythological Background of Job 18," *JBL* 82 (1963): 317. The transliteration of this line is from Smith, “The Baal Cycle,” 142. See also *COS*, 1:265. Smith translates this line, “So will I truly eat with both my hands,” and understands the word *hm* “or” to be part of the next line.

\(^{484}\) Sarna, "Mythological Background," 317. This suggestion was later accepted by Pope, *Job*, 135.

\(^{485}\) *BDB*, 94; *HALOT*, 108-09.
of Death”)\(^{486}\) ravages his (i.e., the wicked’s) members (כְּבֹר מָוֶת). There are several elements of v. 12 which are crucial to understanding its meaning that should be identified. This verse is situated in a context in which Bildad strives to communicate that the ultimate destiny of the wicked is a harrowing death (vv. 1-12). Bildad asserts that one of the ghastly outcomes of wickedness is that the Firstborn of Death feasts on the wicked’s members (כְּבֹר מָוֶת [v. 12b]). The limbs of the wicked mentioned in v. 12b distinctly parallel the parts of the skin (כְּבֹר עוֹר [12a]). However, it is important to note that the reference to limbs in v. 12b does not mention the skin. This parallelism suggests that כְּבֹר וֹיבֵי and כְּבֹר בָּדוֹ are the Firstborn of Death and should have comparable meanings, and that it might be best not to understand the phrase כְּבֹר עוֹר literally.

This suspicion is confirmed upon investigating the identity and action of the Firstborn of Death (כְּבֹר מָוֶת), which is depicted as consuming אֵל (Ink) his prey. This is the only time such a character is mentioned in the Bible. Thus it is imperative to look to the ancient Near Eastern materials to see if any information might be gleaned that could provide a landscape for understanding this character. It is important to note that no discernible character named the Firstborn of Death has been discovered elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern literature.\(^{489}\) Yet, since

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\(^{486}\) Habel understands כְּבֹר מָוֶת to be two nouns in apposition to one another and thus translates this phrase “Firstborn Death” and suggests that it was a title for Mot who was the firstborn of El. Habel, Job, 287. It seems, however, that only a circumstantial case can be made for this translation being that there is no indication from the Ugaritic materials that Mot was indeed considered to be first-born child of El. See, T. J. Lewis, “First-Born of Death,” DDD, 332-335.

\(^{487}\) Chaim Cohen argues that phrase כְּבֹר ויי could be vocalized כְּבֹר וֹיבֵי, and convincingly argues that the preposition כְּבֹר, “for” originally existed in the Hebrew Bible. See Chaim Cohen, “The Hapax Legomenon וֹיבֵי (Ink) in the Context of ‘アイי תָּבַשׁ על חָפֶר רוֹדַי’ (Jeremiah 36:18): A ‘False Friend’ in Modern Hebrew Due to the Masoretes’ Misunderstanding of the Preposition וֹיבֵי Meaning ‘To’ or ‘For’,” Shnaton 24 (2016), 77-101 [Hebrew]. This meaning, however, does not fit our context in which כְּבֹר is that which is being consumed by the Firstborn of Death.

\(^{488}\) BDB, 37.

\(^{489}\) Sarna contends that Mot indeed had seven sons, which would mean that there was, in fact, a firstborn. Nahum M. Sarna, "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," JBL 76 (1957): 21, n. 54. Clines agrees that it is not unreasonable to believe that there was indeed a being referred to as the Firstborn of Death. Clines, Job 1-20, 417. However, the any reference to a “firstborn of Mot” has yet to be found.
the Firstborn of Death is personified through its eating in v. 13, it is reasonable to look into the Canaanite parallels of Mot, the god of the netherworld.

Sure enough, in Ugaritic texts there are references to Mot swallowing his victims similarly to the Firstborn of Death in Job. For example, the insatiable appetite of Mot is alluded to in The Baal Cycle:490

| lyrt.bnpš/bn.ilm.mt. bmhmrt/ydd.il.gzr... | Surely you will descend into Divine Mot’s throat, Into the gullet of El’s Beloved, the Hero. Tablet V, Column I, lines 33-35 |
| špt.lars špt.lšmm/ lšm.lkbkbm. y’rb/b ’l.bkbdh bphyrd/khrr.zt. ybl.arš.wpr/’šm | One lip to the (Netherworld), one lip to Heaven, a tongue to the Stars. Baal will enter his inards, Into his mouth he will descend like a dried olive, Produce of the earth, and fruit of the trees. Tablet V, Column II, lines 2-6 |

In Canaanite literature, Mot is depicted as a ravenous consumer of gods and men with an immense mouth and appetite.492 This imagery of insatiable Mot provides an intriguing backdrop for the reference to the Firstborn of Death preying upon the wicked in v. 13.493 Through this, an

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490 Sarna, "Epic Substratum," 16.
491 Translation (adopted with minor changes), transliteration and numbering taken from Smith, "The Baal Cylcle," 143.
493 Some commentators claim that the reference to Mot is a direct vestige of ancient Canaanite mythology. See Wilson, Job, 197, Crenshaw, Reading Job, 101. Nevertheless, Clines wisely cautions that “(t)he Ugaritic texts are seductive, but they do not always lead unhesitatingly to appropriate exegetical solutions.” Clines, Job 1-20, 418. Along these lines, other commentators point out that there is no clear indication that v. 13 refers to the Canaanite deity Mot and that the word בְּכוֹר can indicate “firstborn” in the sense of the “superlative.” Thus, the “firstborn of death” could be a phrase meaning the “deadliest thing”—perhaps the deadliest manifestation of death or a disease. Seow, Job 1-21, 786. See also Hakham, Job, 141. Rowley likewise states that this phrase, “probably means death in its most terrible form.” Rowley, Job, 130. Arguments about the exact identity of the “Firstborn of Death” aside, the imagery related to the ravenous behavior of Mot provides insight into the ancient Near Eastern thought-world through which the reader is able to better understand the biblical imagery relating to death.
idea emerges from within the ancient Near Eastern conceptual world concerning death. Death was personified/deified and depicted as having a voracious appetite. Death was imagined to be an overindulgent devourer who transferred entities into the netherworld by ingesting them.\footnote{“Descent into the gullet of Mot is the equivalent of descent into the underworld.” Healey, “Mot,” DDD, 599.} By juxtaposing this image with the Firstborn of Death in v. 13b it emerges that, not only is there a relationship in the names of these two figures, but both Mot and the Firstborn of Death are depicted as rapacious eaters who consume their victims.

This consumption is what clarifies the two usages of the word בֵּר in v. 13. Because of the absence of the explicit mention of the Firstborn of Death in the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern literature, it is best to understand this figure in light of imagery relating to Mot. Thus, just as Mot utterly consumes his victims,\footnote{There are several other verses in the Hebrew Bible which reflect the image of death and Sheol possessing a voracious appetite. See for example, Hab 2:5 (וְהוּא כ מָׁוֶת וְלֹא יִשְבָׁע), Isa 5:14 (לָֽכֵן הִרְחִיבָׁה שְאוֹל נ פְשָׁה וּפָׁעֲרָׁה פִּיהָ לִבְלִי חוֹק), and Ps 141:7 (לַקְנֹוד בֵּר מָּנֶשׁ הָעָצִים פָּתַת קֵלֵי-יָעָרָא).} so the Firstborn of Death is depicted as devouring his victims. Those consumed by the Firstborn of Death are the wicked who meet their ultimate fate in being devoured. Drawing upon the Canaanite imagery of Mot assists in revealing that בֵּר is not simply refer to a type of skin ailment or a portion of the skin, but rather, an entire being. This phrase is a synecdoche for the whole body.

The imagery related to Mot in Ugaritic literature provides a glimpse into the world in which the poet of Job wrote the book. Whereas Ugaritic literature has not yet presented an unequivocal answer to the difficult phrase בֵּר, or the identity of the Firstborn of Death, a look into the imagery of Mot’s consumption of beings provides insight into the potential cognitive domain of the readers of ancient Near Eastern literature and Job. Likewise, the genius of the author is further revealed through the reference to the skin. In Bildad’s rebuke, the author reminds the reader of the skin ailments that fell upon Job, while the mentioning of the consumption of the “limbs of the
skin” alludes to one of the main themes of retribution literature—the inevitable death of the wicked.

4.4.2 The King of Terrors—v. 14

As though utterly infatuated with the advent of justice through the death of the wicked, Bildad continues pronouncing this destiny in the presence of his grieving companion. In doing so, Bildad alludes to a point that he’s already made in a previous speech concerning the futility of trusting in one’s house. In the context of chapter 18, the allusion expands in order to communicate that the wicked are devoid of any secure dwelling place (v. 14a). In fact, the tent of the wicked is already dark, symbolizing the wicked’s eventually demise. Still, the wicked are cut off from their tent which serves as their security (וֹיִנָּׁתֵק מֵאָהֳלָּ֣). The wicked are torn from the center of their preservation and protection and exposed to experience the harm they deserve.

As in v. 13, the agent executing the retribution upon the wicked is not immediately identified in v. 14a. Yet in v. 14b, the wicked person is led off to the ominous King of Terrors by an unnamed subject (וְתְּצָעֵ֣דֵה לְמֶלֶךְ בָּ֣הוֹ). The fact that there is no immediate antecedent to the feminine singular has caused interpreters difficulty resulting in various approaches to explaining the text. Sarna proposes that תְּצָעֵ֣דֵה should be understood as a rare masculine form with a t- prefix. Sarna cites Job 20:9, where an anomalous t- prefix appears twice (כַּשְׁוָרָּה, וַתֶּשֶׁרְנֵהוּ), as another example of this phenomenon, as well as claiming that the preterite and present third person masculine singular forms appear with a t- prefix in the Amarna letters. Nevertheless,

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496 See discussion on 8:15 in chapter 2 for the conclusions there concerning the various meanings of the “house.”
497 Seow, Job 1-21, 776.
498 The subject of v. 14 is not explicitly mentioned but the antecedent continues to be the masculine singular collective for the wicked that is referred to from v. 5b onwards.
499 Hartley, Job, 279.
Seow is doubtful of this suggestion and appeals to GKC §144.b, which indicates that the third person feminine singular can be used impersonally. Thus, Seow understands דִּשְׁנָרָה to mean an unnamed terror alluded to by the word צְעִדֵה. One of these terrors לָׁהָׁה leads the wicked away to his death.501

Hakham strives to find an antecedent in the surrounding text and suggests that the feminine imperfect form צְעִדֵה actually refers to the wicked man’s wife. This is because Hakham understands the word צֶלע of v. 12 to refer to the wife of the wicked. However, as was mentioned above, it is preferable to understand צֶלע in this context as a derivative of the word צָלָל “limping, stumbling.” What is helpful about Hakham’s approach, however, is the pursuit of an antecedent within the preceding verses. Ibn Ezra suggests that the subject of צְעִדֵה is the feminine singular noun עֲצָׁת “his counsel” of v. 7b.502 This suggestion is particularly compelling because it emphasizes a consistent theme from v. 7 onward—namely, that the wicked suffer the consequences of their own counsel. The downfall of the wicked is a result of their confidence in their own acumen instead of God’s wisdom. Accordingly, this option provides a clear and sensible antecedent without textual emendation, and it fits into the literary context in a way that reinforces the doctrine of just retribution that Bildad desperately strives to communicate.503

The grim allusion to the personified King of Terrors concerning the punishment of the wicked, in close proximity to the mention of the Firstborn of Death, also provokes an inquiry into Canaanite imagery that might clarify the identity of this peculiar being. The insight concerning the identity of the Firstborn of Death as understood through the depiction of the Canaanite deity Mot in v. 13 spurs an appeal to this same imagery to decipher who/what is being referred to as the

501 Seow, Job 1-21, 787. Seow understands the phrase “the king of terrors” to refer to death.
503 Some commentators have resorted to emendation of צְעִדֵה; see Pope, Job, 136; Rowley, Job, 131. However, emendation seems unnecessary in that there are several viable options to maintain the current text.
“King of Terrors.” The traditional conclusion that stems from this methodology results in likening the King of Terrors to the Canaanite deity Mot. This inference is supported by the fact that Death was perceived as a monarch who reigned over the underworld in various ancient cultures. The king of the netherworld in Babylonia, for example, was Nergal, and among the Greeks, Pluto was infernal king. Considering the mythopoetic images stemming from ancient cultures as well as the context of Bildad’s retributive claim, a direct correspondence has been proposed between the King of Terrors and the Canaanite deity Mot.

It is important, however, to be careful not to presume beyond what can reasonably be demonstrated through the ancient Near Eastern materials with regard to the text at hand. There is, at this point, no evidence that the poet of Job was doing anything but utilizing recognizable and understandable terminology of his time. The existence of a king of the underworld in other literatures does not necessarily indicate that this figure must have been derived from a single source—whether this be the Ugaritic Mot or any other comparable figure. The Israelites—and thereby, the poet of Job—were part of the ancient Near Eastern thought world in which Death was personified, considered to be a voracious entity, and in which there was a ruler over the netherworld. Thus, personified Death in Job, though admittedly could have been derived from the Ugaritic deity Mot, could have also quite naturally emerged within the ancient Israelite milieu. Consequently, there seems to be a clear personification of Death in Job 18, but there is no certain

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504 See Sarna, "Mythological Background," 316; Pope, Job, 136; Habel, Job, 288.
505 Hartley, Job, 279.
506 Sarna posits that the King of Terrors in v. 14 corresponds to Death in v. 13, which is a direct reference to the Canaanite deity Mot. This suggests that the Firstborn of Death would occupy the same position in Canaan as did Namtar son of Nergal and Ereshkigal in Babylonian mythology. Sarna, "Mythological Background," 316; see also, Dhorme, Job, 265. The major problem with this approach is that Mot is nowhere described as having children. T.J. Lewis notes, that “(t)he weakness of this view is the lack of attestation of Namtar bearing the explicit epithet ‘first Born of Death’. If this epithet was so well known that the author of Job borrowed it, should not one expect to find at least a single example of the epithet in the extant Akkadian corpus?” “Mot,” DDD, quote from p. 334, but see also U. Rüterswörden, “King of Terrors,” DDD, 487.
507 See Pope, Job, 136; Clines, Job 1-20, 419; Seow, Job 1-21, 787.
evidence that this persona is borrowed from the Canaanites or alludes to this exact Ugaritic deity who is never called a “king.” Since the apparent epithet “King of Terrors” has yet to be found in the Ugarit corpus of literature, a direct alignment with Mot is uncertain, though possible.

It is safe to say, however, that the “King of Terrors” is at least a reference to Death personified, as is Death in the epithet “Firstborn of Death.” It may be that the author personifies Death as the King of Terrors, and the Firstborn of Death functions as Death’s agent in transferring entities into the netherworld through consumption. Amos Hakham suggests that the Firstborn of Death may in fact be, “הראשון והעליון שבמלאכי מוות.” This understanding accommodates the personification of Death by carefully examining Bildad’s comments alongside the ancient Near Eastern imagery, as well as harmonizes with Bildad’s repeated insinuations regarding the fate of the wicked in chapter 18—namely, the wicked will suffer a harrowing death.

4.5 Terror Resides in the Wicked’s Estates—vv. 15

At this point, Bildad departs from the theme of the wicked’s destruction ending in death and redirects attention to a former motif concerning the tent of the wicked. The misfortune that besieges the dwelling place of the wicked is quite a common theme in Bildad’s speeches as well as by Job’s other companions. Bildad recently mentions the futility of the tent of the wicked in v. 14 in an attempt to convey their lack of security in their habitation. In v. 15, the tent reappears in an unfavorable context. However, the reference to the tent emerges in the midst of such challenging language that it is difficult to deduce the misfortune being suggested. Indeed, the only

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508 “The first and the highest of the angels of death.” Hakham, Job, 141.
509 See, for example, Eliphaz in 5:24; 15:34 and Bildad in 8:22; 18:6, 14. This continues to be a theme and is picked up again by Zophar in 20:16. The motif concerning judgment upon the habitation of the wicked is further extended when considering the imagery related to the house (ביתי) in the dialogues. See 8:14-15, 15:28, 20:19, 28.
conveniently understood, and agreed upon, aspect of v. 14a relates to some kind of adverse situation afflicting the tent of the wicked.

It is commonly recognized that the core of the difficulty of v. 14a lies in the troublesome phrase מִבְלִי-לֹ. Commentators have generally acknowledged this phrase as problematic and noted its inability to serve as the subject of the verb תִשְכוֹן, which is evidently in need of a third person feminine singular subject. Ball suggests that the night demon לִילִית should be read based upon semantic parallels between Job 18:15 and Isaiah 34, as well as the Old Greek reading ἐν νυκτὶ ἀντον. It is immediately evident that the appeal to the context of Isaiah 34 is the more persuasive argument. It is reasonable to appeal to a context in which גָּפְרִית appears (Isa 34:9), נָוֶה, a semantic parallel to אֹהֶל, is used (Isa 34:15), and לִילִית surfaces (Isa 34:14). However, the appeal to the Old Greek is problematic being that it is based upon the Greek translator’s misunderstanding the Hebrew appellative לִילִית as the phrase “his (i.e. the wicked’s) night” (בְּלֵילוּ). Additionally, the Greek preposition ἐν only accounts for the Hebrew preposition ב and not מ —which is unaccounted for in the Greek. Lastly, though the possessive pronoun וֹ of וֹבְלֵיל can easily be explained as a confusion with a י, it is more difficult to resolve the reason for the ת of the proposed לִילִית which does not appear in the Masoretic Text. The proposal to read לִילִית is best argued on contextual grounds based upon its close proximity to the Firstborn of Death and the King of Terrors. This being said, the explanation for לִילִית breaks down when striving to make sense out of how the text arrived at its current form, despite presenting interesting rhetorical parallels with Isaiah 34, and its closeness to other personified entities in Job 18:13-14.

510 Ball, Job, 266.
511 Ibid. See also Rowley, Job, 131, who follows suit predominantly based upon Isa 34:14 and makes no mention of the Greek witnesses.
Other commentators have strived to make sense of the current form of the text on philological grounds. Currently, the most influential philological approach to v. 15a is Dahood’s proposal introduced nearly 60 years ago. Dahood claims that the Hebrew text is consonantally sound and contends that making sense of the text is simply an issue of shifting consonants and vocalization. According to Dahood, the Hebrew consonants contain a Hebrew equivalent of the Akkadian nablu and Ugaritic nblat, bearing the significance of “fire, flames.” In this view, the word ה is attached to the following word (יְזֹרֶה) as a lamed of emphasis. This realignment renders v. 15a “Fire [mabbēl] is set in his tent,” which would correspond with Zophar’s previous statement, ת שְכֵן בְאֹהָׁלֶיךָ ע וְלָׁה (11:14). Dahood asserts that this philological explanation also clarifies the feminine singular verb (תִשְכוֹן) because comparable words for fire are feminine in both Akkadian (išātu) and Ugaritic (nblat). The fact that the corresponding Hebrew word for the proposed mabbēl “fire” (אֵש) accompanies brimstone (גָּפְרִית) in several places in the Bible (i.e. Gen 19:24; Ezek 38:22; Ps 11:6), provides further support, according to Dahood, for this explanation. Many modern commentators, considering the Hebrew phrase מִבְלִי-לוֹ to be meaningless in this context, have followed Dahood’s proposition of introducing the word mabbēl to mean “fire” to parallel “brimstone,” and consider this a reasonable solution to the present quandary.

Notwithstanding, there have been some challenges to Dahood’s conclusion in more recent years. Initially, one potentially problematic issue is Dahood’s introduction of a hapax legomenon to solve this problem. Even if the word mabbēl were to exist in Biblical Hebrew, it would not necessarily assume the exact meaning of related words in other Semitic languages, nor would it unquestionably be the same gender. Additionally, Dahood’s conclusions are a bit puzzling in that

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513 Pope, Job, 136; Habel, Job, 281-82; Clines, Job 1-20, 407, 420; Wilson, Job, 200.
he does not fully explain the text at hand. It is not completely clear what Dahood suggests doing with the ר of the word מִבְלִי, nor does he explain the ו of the word וֹ.514 Dahood’s proposal is admirable in that it strives to deal with the consonantal text, which he himself concedes is established through the versions, yet ultimately fails to account for all of its content.

As acknowledged by Dahood, there is indeed evidence for the Masoretic text—which is clearly the lectio difficilior—throughout the versions. For instance, the Targum renders מִבְלִי as מַדְלִיתה לְיה, a translation akin to “without it for him,” which suggests the existence of a Vorlage that was similar to the MT. Additionally, though the Old Greek reading ἐν νυκτὶ αὐτῷ is problematic, Theodotion’s translation κατασκηνώσει ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ αὐτῷ ἀνυπαρξία “in his tent dwells non-existence,”515 attests to a reading similar to the MT and the Targum.

Though admittedly still difficult, further light might be shed on this phrase by appealing to other similarly terse statements in this Bible which negate possession. For example, a corresponding negative statement in which there is a proposition followed by a word of negation and then a possessive pronoun preceded by a lamed appears in the whirlwind speeches. In Job 39:16, God says of a certain bird that, “She treats her young ones harshly (as if) they were not hers” (הִקְשִיח בָּנֶיהָ לֹא לָה). There is further evidence of a comparable negation of possession in Hab 2:6. In a proclamation against the king of Babylon the prophet states, “Woe to the one who increases things that are not his” (הוֹי מְרֵב לֹא לו). Though this particular phrase is lacking the preposition prior to the word of negation which appears in both Job 18:15 and 39:16, it possesses the other elements of the negation and evidently serves the same function in its context. Based

514 Seow, Job 1-21, 788.
515 Translation mine.
upon these data, it seems that the difficult phrase מִבְלִי לוֹ can be understood as another manner of communicating “nothing of his.” 516

At this point it is imperative to make sense of the seemingly anomalous usage of the feminine singular תִשְכוֹן in v. 15a. The mentioning of בַלָהוֹת in the preceding line suggests the thought of retributive justice being carried out by invoking tremendous fear upon the wicked. As mentioned above, this imagery was previously broached by Eliphaz in 15:21, 24. Bildad touches on this same motif in 18:11 and intensifies it by using entrapment imagery to depict the wicked ultimately meeting their demise. Therefore, it is not surprising that Bildad eventually describes the wicked’s encounter with the King of Terrors in v. 14 as the culmination of their horrid fate. This considered, v. 15a is a natural continuation of the theme of terror frightening the wicked. Yet at this point, Bildad combines two of the retributive justice themes of his speeches – that of the misfortune upon the dwelling place (see i.e., 8:22) 517 of the wicked, and their endless state of intense fear. Bildad depicts terror, one of the בַלָהוֹת from vv. 11 recalled in v. 14, infiltrating the life of the wicked in every aspect, and taking up residence (תִשְכוֹן) in their habitation.

According to Bildad, as opposed to the customary possessions in the house of the righteous, terror dwells in the wicked’s tents and none of their possession are left. This barrenness is caused by the spewing of sulfur over the property of the wicked as set forth in the next line. The casting of sulfur upon the land necessarily renders it infertile. 518 Sulfur is also used in divine

516 Hartley, Job, 277, n. 6. In spite of this suggestion, it is still difficult to make sense of the prepositional phrase מִבְלִי לוֹ. My translation, “Fear dwells in his tent—nothing of his!” contrasts the phrase מִבְלִי לוֹ with the terror which takes up residence in the tent of the wicked. This translation admittedly takes מִבְלִי לוֹ to be a nominal phrase as opposed to modifying a noun-phrase. Ultimately, this difficulty remains unresolved as none of the aforementioned solutions are satisfactory.

517 This motif continues as Zophar reiterates judgment upon the tent of the wicked in 20:26.

destruction and judgment in the Bible,\textsuperscript{519} which implies that Bildad suggests that God is responsible for the retribution he proposes.

4.6  

**Eradication of the Wicked’s Progeny—vv. 16-17, 19**

As a conclusive portrayal of the outcome of wickedness, Bildad vows decisive punishments upon the impious and their offspring. The idea that the progeny of the wicked suffer for the transgression of their parents is a motif indirectly broached by Eliphaz in 4:11 upon mentioning the potential loss of the lioness’ cubs. Bildad refers to the demise of Job’s children in his prior speech (8:3), but now he expounds upon what he may have been formerly insinuating. The lineage of the wicked suffers affliction because of the depravity of their iniquitous predecessors.

4.6.1  “His Roots will Dry up”—v. 16

In v. 16, Bildad reintroduces botanic imagery to underscore the death of the wicked. Bildad initially used botanic imagery in 8:11-14, 16-19, to distinguish between the pious and the impious. Job subsequently takes up this imagery and alludes to the withering plant as a metaphor for the brevity of human life (14:7-14). In this second speech, Bildad amplifies the botanic metaphor above and beyond both how he and Job use the analogy. Read in context (vv. 16-17, 19), Bildad’s claim becomes evident—the wicked are banished from the world, with no hope for progeny.

Bildad’s claim that the roots of the wicked will dry up from below (מִת חַתְשָׁרוֹ יִבָּשִׁו) is, for all intents and purposes, a response to Job’s hope for the tree (14:7). Job previously maintained that, unlike human beings, a tree could be restored if sufficient water were to reach its stump (14:7-

\textsuperscript{519} Wilson, *Job*, 199-200. See Ps 11:6; Isa 34:9. This was even an image that carried into Second Temple period Jewish thought (e.g., Luke 17:29; Rev 9:17-18).
In 18:16, Bildad uses this same imagery to point out that dry roots indicate a dead tree. Lack of water to the roots below indicates withered branches above (ָּקְצִיר). Bildad dismisses Job’s suggestion of the possibility for renewed growth for a tree whose roots have dried out and renders the tree with no life source—dead. The depiction of the destruction of the plant stemming from its deepest parts all the way through its utmost branches is a merism through which Bildad depicts the complete eradication of the wicked. Bildad’s idiom of the utterly destroyed plant as retribution upon the impious is familiar in biblical literature in contexts where God executes judgment (e.g., Amos 2:9 and Hos 9:16), thereby coinciding with the just retribution idea that the wicked suffer divine castigation.

As with Eliphaz’s usage of botanic imagery in 15:32-33, some commentators have noted that in v. 16 Bildad suggests the eradication of the children of the wicked. Hakham, for example, notes the immediate context of Bildad’s tree metaphor and states, “הרשע יישם ד, הוא וכול צאצאיו, ולא “. Clines also recognizes the context of this passage and understands the branches of the wicked to refer to offspring. Clines asserts that “it is not the wicked man himself who is here destroyed…but his family and possessions (a similar thought more prosaically in v. 19).” This is certainly a plausible reading, though the verse is not without ambiguity. Regardless of whether one considers Bildad’s assertion in v. 18 to refer to the wicked

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520 Crenshaw, Reading Job, 100.
521 Though קָׁצִיר is in the singular, it should be understood as a collective term just as Job uses it in 14:9 (קָׁצִיר). Rowley, Job, 131.
522 Hartley, Job, 279.
524 Wilson, Job, 198, Clines, Job 1-20, 421.
525 “The wicked person will be destroyed, he and all of his descendants, and there will not remain a memory of him. Like that which is said in the next verse.” Hakham, Job, 141.
526 Clines, Job 1-20, 420.
proper, or the beginning of an allusion to the wicked’s descendants continued in vv. 17, 19, ultimately both the wicked and their progeny suffer the consequences of their unrighteousness.

4.6.2 No Name, No Progeny: No Lineage for the Wicked—vv. 17, 19

The idea that the roots and/or branches of v. 16 resemble the children of the impious is particularly strengthened when it is read together with vv. 17 and 19. In v. 17, Bildad asserts that the wicked have no place upon the earth as their memory perishes (וֹזִכְר אָׁב ד מִנִּי אָׁרֶץ). The subsequent parallel statement confirms the judgment of obliteration upon the impious and their lineage by straightforwardly declaring that the name of the wicked will be removed from the face of the earth (וְלֹא שֵם לוֹ חוּץ פְנֵי ע ל). Though children are not explicitly mentioned in this curse, the reference to the memory of the wicked as well as their name certainly implies the future lineage of the impious. This insinuation is clarified in v. 19 where Bildad unequivocally proclaims that the wicked have no descendants among their people (וֹלֹא נִין ל וְלֹא נֶכֶד בְע מוֹ). The fate of the progeny of the wicked emerges in 19b where the children of the wicked are included in the destruction that comes upon the dwelling place of the wicked. In the house of the wicked person, there are no survivors (בִמְגוּרָׁיו וְאֵין שָׁרִיד).

4.6.2.1 Progeny as a Problem in the Bible

The dread of the fate presented in vv. 17, 19 is especially understood when considered in the wider biblical context. Two great calamities of life in biblical thought are perishing without descendants and the obliteration of one’s name so as not to be remembered by future

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527 The phrase שֵם is used in this context to indicate categorical negation similar to how the word ן in other contexts. Cf. Job 8:19; 21:9. Joüon §160oa; GKC §152d; Hakham, Job, 164.
528 “Every last kinsman of the wicked man’s is, like him, marked down for destruction, no matter where he may think to hide himself.” Clines, Job 1-20, 422.
529 Rowley, Job, 132.
In the Bible, a person who has a good name is a respectable figure. Hence, striving for the continuation of honor within the community through the preservation of an honorable offspring that could perpetuate the family name proved to be a noble goal. For instance, the biblical narratives of Abraham, Samson, and the conception of Samuel, all prominently feature a concern for a lack of progeny, and the resulting desperation associated with the inability to procreate.

If one were to have one’s name removed, or the memory of an individual were to perish, they would leave no positive impression upon their community. Thus, the forgotten person ostensibly lived a life lacking worth, devoid of future hope, and would unavoidably fade into obscurity. In this manner, people who are deprived of progeny, and consequently no lasting memory, suffer a dreadful judgment in the world of the Bible. Concerning one’s memorial in the Bible, Clines states:

Rulers who have inscriptions engraved with accounts of their exploits ensure that their ‘memorial’ or memory of them will endure (cf. 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:5)…The levirate marriage…is represented as a “raising up” or perpetuating of the “name” of a dead man, by creating a legal line of descendants for him (Deut 25:7). To destroy one’s memorial (אֶזֶר) is to destroy one’s post mortem existence…and so to render a person as if that one had never been. For this reason, cutting off the “memorial” or “mention” of an enemy is a means of his destruction (Ex 17:14, Deut 25:19 32:26 Isa 26:14, Psa 9:7 (6), 34:17 (16), 9:15, 112:6…it is the destruction of his progeny and possessions that annihilates the “memory” or “name” of the wicked. They do not perish automatically when he dies; but the effects of his wickedness reach beyond himself and involve the whole of his

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530 Habel, Job, 288. Wilson notes the significance of Levirite marriage in Israelite tradition and how it relates to the perceived need for descendants commenting that, “(c)hildren carry on the name and memory of the dead. So important was the place of the descendant in assuring the continuation of memory that, when one dies childless, the rather extreme expectation of the levirate marriage was enacted to supply a descendant to carry on the name of the deceased.” Wilson, Job, 199. For the curse of eliminating one’s memory (אֶזֶר), see Ps 109:15 and Prov 10:7.
531 See the respect associated with having a good name in Prov 22:1. Cf. Prov 3:4, 10:7; Eccl 7:1. See especially Ps 37:25-26 where the children of the righteous are provided for and depicted as a blessing.
532 This motif transcended the period of the Hebrew Bible into Second Temple Jewish literature and appears again in the story of the conception of John the Baptist. Pope, Job, 136-37.
533 Wilson, Job, 198.
534 Hartley, Job, 280.
family…It is a greater bitterness by far to know before one’s own death that one’s posterity has been destroyed.\textsuperscript{535}

Understood in their biblical context, Bildad’s words are a harsh invective against those who do not honor God. It is an assertion that they will be completely wiped out of history as if they were the enemies of God.\textsuperscript{536} Wilson adds that “within Israel’s theological understanding, they considered descendants and a continued line to be the blessing of God. To be cut off without a descendant was to be cursed or punished by \textit{God himself}.\textsuperscript{537} In addition to this, Bildad’s comments in vv. 17, 19 ostensibly reference Job’s bereavement of his own children. Bildad seems to be suggesting that Job’s current situation with no offspring, descendant, or survivor—precisely that which was exceedingly dreaded by the ancient Israelites—is a manifestation of divine repudiation.\textsuperscript{538}

\textbf{4.6.2.2 Progeny as a Problem in Ugaritic Epics}

The twin tragedy of perishing without descendants and a vanishing memory transcends the Bible and is evident in other ancient Near Eastern literature. This phenomenon reflects a similar concern for progeny in extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern cultures. John Walton remarks that in the ancient Near East, “the hope for the future on the earth was tied to making a name, either through exploits of renown, building projects that would endure, or, most importantly, by \textit{siring}

\textsuperscript{535} Clines, \textit{Job 1-20}, 421.
\textsuperscript{536} See, for example, the severe denunciation of the children of the evildoers in Isa 14:20 (לא תקראו לעלם имя עז לארע.ones themselves) intended as a condemnation of the memory of the wicked through disregarding their seed.
\textsuperscript{537} Wilson, \textit{Job}, 225, 228, quotation from p. 225. Italics mine. See Isa 48:18, where those who are obedient to God are depicted as having many children (והיה להם חיות ויהיו לארע.ones themselves) as well as Ps 37:28, where the seed of the wicked are cut off (זֶרֶשׁ לארע.ones themselves). Children are considered a blessing (Ps 127:3-5), the glory of their parents (Prov 17:6), and the tradition bearers of their community (Exod 12:26; Deut 4:9-10; 11:9).
\textsuperscript{538} Andersen, \textit{Job}, 205. Interestingly, see Jer 11:19 in which those who plot against Jeremiah are depicted as cutting him off so that his name would no longer be remembered (וְשָׁמְוָה לֹא יִזָּכֵר עוֹד). That is to say, Jeremiah’s enemies planned to sentence the childless prophet (16:2), as if he were counted among the wicked.
Two Ugaritic texts, *The Epic of Kirta*\(^{540}\) and *The Epic of Aqhat*,\(^{541}\) are both predominantly concerned with the continuation of the protagonist’s family line.\(^{542}\) These epics present comparable scenarios to the biblical accounts in which the absence of progeny is recognized as such a great misfortune that the protagonist is forced to grapple with the reproach of childlessness by ultimately taking action.

### 4.6.2.2.1 Epic of Kirta

In the *Epic of Kirta*,\(^{543}\) Kirta, king of the Beit Huburu, is bereaved of his wife and eight children.\(^{544}\) Greenstein summarizes the dilemma concerning the lack of progeny that emerges at this juncture of the story and how it relates to Job:

> A king is bereft of family, his dynasty threatened with extinction. That is, as scholars often remark, a concern endemic to dynasty kingship. This disaster is described step by step, like the fateful series of announcements to Job that his estate and children have been destroyed. And just as the name Job (‘Iyyôb) is interpreted in the biblical text in the light of his situation—as the apparent ‘enemy’ (‘ôyêb) of God (see Job 13:24)—the name Kirta would seem to be played upon according to a Semitic derivation: The man ‘cut off’ (karûtu or karîtu) from progeny.\(^{545}\)

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\(^{541}\) Simon B. Parker, "Aqhat," in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (ed. Simon B. Parker; SBLWAW 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 49-80. See also Dennis Pardee’s translation and notes in *COS*, 1.103 and H. L. Ginsberg’s in *ANET*, 149-55.


\(^{543}\) Referred to as “Kirtu” by some and “Keret” by others. See the note by Pardee in *COS*, 1:333, n. 3, who cogently points out that the vocalization “Keret” is the least likely because of the lack of evidence of a corresponding vowel in Ugaritic for the Hebrew seghol.

\(^{544}\) De Moor states that “Kirtu...marries no less than seven times, only to lose all his wives before they are able to bear him offspring” and subsequently footnotes that “this interpretation is accepted by most scholars now.” De Moor, “Theodicy in the Texts of Ugarit,” 116, n. 49. Yet, Greenstein disagrees and argues that “from the perspective of narrative structure and theme, it only makes sense if Kirta lost his children and not a series of wives. In order to produce the eight children he sired according to the opening line of the epic (*CAT* 1.14.1.7-9), he had needed only one wife.” Greenstein, “Wisdom in Ugarit,” 78, n. 44. See Greenstein’s translation and plot summary in Greenstein, "Kirta," 10, 12.

\(^{545}\) Ibid., 10.
The death of Kirta’s children leaves Kirta desperate for a son and heir. Only through producing offspring would Kirta be able to continue his monarchic and family lines. The extermination of his royal and family line would have been the most unfavorable outcome of Kirta’s life. Kirta’s despondent situation is presented in the following manner:

| krt . ḫtkn . rš /  | Kirta—his progeny ruined!  
|---------------------|--------------------------  
| krt . grdš . mknt   | Kirta—his line is sundered!  
|                     | Tablet 1, Col. 1, lines 10-11 |

| y’n . ḫtkh / krt   | He sees his progeny, Kirta,  
| y’n . ḫtkh rš /    | He sees his progeny ruined,  
| mid . grdš . ṭbth /| His dynasty utterly sundered.  

| wbklhn . šph . yitbd /  | So all his descendants have perished,  
| wb . phyrh . yrg /     | In sum, the lot of his heirs.  
|                         | Tablet 1, Col. 1, lines 21-25

The divine realm indeed acknowledges Kirta’s mournful supplication. El descends in a dream and inquires regarding his anguish. Kirta responds to El’s concern and communicates that he longs for offspring more than anything in the world:

| wyqrб / bšal . krt .  | Now El approached, asking Kirta:  
| mat / krt . kybkы /    | “What ails Kirta, that he cries?  
| ydm‘ . n’mn . ţglm / il. | That he weeps, the Pleasant, Lad of El?  
|                         | Tablet 1, Col. I, lines 37-41  

(Kirta responds):

| [tn . ] bnm . aqny /  | [Let] me procreate sons!  
| [tn . ṭa]rm . amid /   | [Let] me produce a brood!  
|                         | Tablet 1, Col. II, lines 4-5

546 There are admittedly differences in the cause for the lack of progeny in Job and Kirta. Kirta cannot produce offspring because his wife apparently dies along with his children (Tablet 1, Col. I, lines 14-15). Job’s children perished because of tragic disasters fallen upon them with divine permission. Kirta must produce offspring to procure the royal line whereas Job is not royalty. However, what is important here is that both of these ancient Near Eastern compositions depict an honorable man deprived of progeny, which in the Bible and ancient Near East was considered a deplorable condition.


548 Ibid., 13-14.
Further in the story, Kirta petitions the hand of his future wife, Lady Huraya, from her father, King Pabuli of Udum. Upon sending two messengers to King Pabuli for Huraya’s hand in marriage, Kirta spells out the chief reason for desiring to marry. Kirta wants a wife:

| wld . šph . lkr/t . | Who will bear a child for Kirta,  |
| wglm . lʻbd / il . | A lad for the Servant of El.       |
| Tablet 2, Col., VI, lines 33-35

Upon marrying Huraya, Kirta actualizes his longing for descendants by having eight children. Nevertheless, Kirta consequently falls severely ill because he departs from the instructions of the god El and makes a vow to the goddess Asherah. However, Ashera inflicts Kirta with a fatal sickness because he forgets to fulfill his vow to her. This affliction is also reflected in the natural world through a drought. Kirta eventually recovers from his illness with the help of El who creates a female golem with the ability to remove Kirta’s disease.

At this point, Kirta returns to his throne, but the drama in not quite complete. In an ironic turn, Kirta’s eldest son, the progeny whom he had so earnestly sought, plans to depose his father from his throne, unaware that he had been healed. This compels Kirta to invoke a curse upon his overambitious son. Despite the ironic ending, the Ugaritic *Epic of Kirta* portrays the unfortunate nature of a situation in which not having offspring to perpetuate the family lineage and name would have been disastrous. This ultimately drove King Kirta to action so as to avoid a deplorable status.

4.6.2.2.2  *Epic of Aqhat*

The same type of desperate situation emerges at the beginning of the *Epic of Aqhat* in which the protagonist, Daniel, is devoid of offspring. The story begins with the childless Daniel

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549 Ibid., 23.
550 Ibid., 10. This is where the present text concludes, though some scholars believe it may continue. See also De Moor, “Theodicy in the Texts of Ugarit,” 116-21.
551 “Daniel,” as per Parker and Ginsberg, is used as the transliterated version of *dnil* (as opposed to the alternative versions of “Danel” or “Danilu”) for the sake of consistency.
steadfastly performing rituals. Daniel carries out these rituals for six days before Baal appears on
the seventh. Baal responds to Daniel’s rituals by invoking El to bless Daniel with a son. Baal
points out that Daniel’s precarious situation is a result of his inability to engender offspring as is
typically expected of men. Baal’s petition to El on behalf of Daniel highlights Daniel’s adherence
and persistence in performing rituals (Tablet 1, Col. I, lines 18-22). Baal then reveals the reasons
for which he petitions El for offspring on behalf of Daniel:

| nṣb.skn.ilibh | To set up his Ancestor’s stela, |
| bqdš/ztr. ’mh. | The sign of his Sib in the sanctuary; |
| larš.mšu.qtr/h/ | To rescue his smoke from the Underworld, |
| l’pr.dmr.qtr/h. | To protect his steps from the Dust; |
| tbq.lht/nîṣh. | To stop his abusers’ spite, |
| grš.d. ’ṣy.lnh/ | To drive his troublers away; |
| ahj.ydh.bškrn. | To grasp his arm when he’s drunk, |
| m’nsh/[k]šb’ ynh. | To support him when sated with wine; |
| spu.ksmh.bt.b’l/ | To eat his portion in Baal’s house, |
| [w]mntth.bt.il. | His share in the house of El; |
| ṭḥ.ggh.byml/[ti]t. | To daub his roof when there’s [mu]d, |
| rḥs.npšh.byml.rf/ | To wash his stuff when there’s dirt. |

The reasons given by Baal are essentially practical, yet vital, responsibilities of offspring
(i.e., honor their ancestors, domestic protection, maintain family property, etc.). Daniel lacks a
son to perform these duties, unlike his brothers who all have families. El is sympathetic to Daniel
and grants Baal’s petition to give Daniel a son. El proclaims that he grants Daniel a son for the
same reasons Baal communicated (Tablet 1, Col. I, lines 44-48)—to fulfill the essential duties
of a son.

Daniel receives the good news that he would have a child and no longer be deprived of the
offspring from which his siblings and fellows benefit. Daniel is then told that he would beget a

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552 Parker, “Aqhat,” 52-53. For a discussion on variant translations and interpretations of this passage see
David P. Wright, *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale
553 Ibid., 54.
descendant to fulfill the same practical duties initially communicated by Baal, and reinforced by El (Tablet 1, Col. II, lines 1-8).\textsuperscript{554} Daniel joyously receives the announcement and breaks into laughter. He then reflects upon the message just announced to him and rejoices that he will be like his siblings and peers who have progeny. He too will have a successor who will fulfill the practical responsibilities of an heir (Tablet 1, Col. II, lines 16-23).\textsuperscript{555}

Daniel’s persistence in carrying out rituals at the beginning of the epic demonstrates his awareness of the abnormal nature of his situation, his profound aspiration to possess an heir like his peers, and hence, his need to invoke the divine. The repetition of Daniel’s eagerness and “need” to reproduce to be like his siblings and fellows presents Daniel’s lack of progeny as an aberrant family situation. Additionally, the reiteration of the practical responsibilities of an heir four times alludes to the great hardship that would be brought upon Daniel were he not to bear progeny.

Seeing how a lack of progeny was a deep concern in the Ugaritic epics of \textit{Kirta} and \textit{Aqhat} sheds light on how commonplace this issue was in the ancient Near Eastern thought world and how a lack of offspring was perceived as a threat to perpetuating one’s name and memory in the world of the Bible.\textsuperscript{556} More pointedly, these epics provide a backdrop to discern the severity of Bildad’s comments in Job 18:17, 19. By asserting that the wicked would have no progeny, and thereby no memory or name, Bildad is playing on one of the greatest personal fears of the Israelites and their ancient Near Eastern neighbors.\textsuperscript{557}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{554} Ibid., 55.
  \item \textsuperscript{555} Ibid., 56.
  \item \textsuperscript{556} Jacobsen adds that in Mesopotamia, “(w)ithout children without sons, there could be no personal adequacy, no success in life.” Therefore, the production of offspring was entrusted to the gods: “(i)t was the personal god and goddess, incarnate in the father and mother, who engendered the child and brought it into being.” Jacobsen, \textit{Treasures of Darkness}, 158.
  \item \textsuperscript{557} The fact that Job and the Ugaritic epics share this motif regarding a lack of progeny may be as a result of the continuity between Israelite wisdom literature and Ugaritic compositions. Though Ras Shamra has not yielded any Ugaritic wisdom literature per se, it is plausible that wisdom developed in Canaan, and that this Canaanite heritage might serve as a backdrop for biblical wisdom literature. Regarding the Kirta and Aqhat Greenstein specifically states, “تقنية אבירותי ואכרחיות—olson אקהת ותלחת חרות الملك, והיווסמ במעון ומכפרים ושקדום בעפרות המקהל.” (The two known epics from Ugarit—the \textit{Epic of Aqhat} and the \textit{Epic of King Kirta}, are saturated with themes and motifs whose
\end{itemize}
4.7 Making an Example of the Wicked—vv. 20-21

Through Bildad’s speech he emphasizes the extensive nature of the retributive consequences of wickedness beyond simply affecting the wicked. Bildad has claimed that not only does the impiety of the wicked bring about their demise, but it also affects their children—and even, as just noted above, their potential to engender a lineage. The motif of one’s wickedness having consequences for others continues in v. 21, in which Bildad relates that the fate of the wicked is an ubiquitous model of disgrace. The wicked serve as a public example to those who see their fate, casting horror upon the world. All those aware of the destruction of the wicked, including those from the most distant recesses of the earth, must take heed so as never to be branded a “forgetter of God.”

The public humiliation of the wicked is presented through a merism in v. 20 depicting all of the inhabitants of the world through two contrasting populations (א חֲרֹנִים...וְק דְמֹנִים). Both of these directional words⁵⁵⁸ are used substantively and modify the verbs in their respective lines suggesting that they refer to people (i.e. Easterners, Westerners). It is difficult to ascertain which, if any, specific geographical areas the poet may have been striving to portray.⁵⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the context indicates that people from all over are appalled at the “day” of the wicked (ע ל-יוֹמָׁם נָש מוּ). “His day” (וֹיָמ) plainly designates an appointed time in which the wicked will inevitably suffer their due punishment resulting from their wickedness.⁵⁶⁰

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⁵⁵⁸ See these words used to indicate direction in Joel 2:20 and Zech 14:8. Rowley, Job, 132; Hartley, Job, 280, n. 16.
⁵⁵⁹ Commentators are divided with regard to the potential geographical reference behind the merism. Seow notes that this can refer to the Transjordan as well as the Cisjordan. Seow, Job 1-21, 789. Clines states, “(t)he terminology seems built upon the expressions הים האחרון for the “Western” Sea (Deut 11:24: etc.) and הים הקדמוני for the “Eastern” Sea (Dead Sea; Ezek 47:18: etc.),” and by inference, would not include the Transjordan. Clines, Job 1-20, 407.
⁵⁶⁰ For example, Jer 50:27 (רְבּ -בְ א נֹב יִשְׁמָעֵאל). See Habel, Job, 288; Seow, Job 1-21, 789.
The crux of what Bildad declares lies in the idea that the wicked do not fade away unnoticed. God makes an example out of the wicked on the occasion of their “day,” in which they not only meet their fate, but do so in a highly visible manner. The sentiment of horror which overcomes spectators (אָׁחֲזוּ שָׁעָה) from far and wide is in response to witnessing the wicked’s tragic fate. The world’s inhabitants publically witnessing the fateful day of the wicked demonstrates the validity of the law of retribution and that it is indeed functional. Observing divine retributive justice in action serves as a universally ominous warning to those who might consider the ways of the wicked.

Resuming his personal stance on the outcome of wickedness in v. 21, Bildad concludes his speech through a symbolic reference to the dwelling place of the wicked (ךְאֵלֶה מִשְכְנוֹת ע וָל). Following the public judgment upon the wicked in v. 20, it is unlikely that Bildad is referring to the literal house of the wicked. Rather, Bildad’s allusion to the place of the wicked is intended to emphasize their moral condition and not their actual physical location (וְזֶה מְקוֹם לֹא-יָד-אֵל). With this in mind, Bildad closes by addressing the final designation of the wicked in terms of whether or not they know God. Not knowing God, according to Bildad, demonstrates the impious’ insistence upon rejecting God, and therefore, their rightfully suffering the consequences of their misdeeds.

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561 Habel, Job, 288.
562 Ibid., 284.
563 That is, as opposed to words of v. 21 being the words of the onlookers. See Clines, Job 1-20, 423. This is contra the Targum’s ייִימרָה לְוחָדוּת אֲנִיָּי מְשֶרֶדֶת וָלָיָא and Ball, who accepts this reading. Ball, Job, 268.
4.8 Summary

In chapter 18 Bildad resumes the theme of vengeance upon the wicked, asserting essentially the same conclusions regarding just retribution as had Eliphaz in chapter 15. Despite the hackneyed theology, Bildad expresses the doctrine of just retribution through several distinct ploys throughout his second speech. Initially, Bildad focuses on the dichotomy between light and darkness, a concept which emerges in other biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature, as reference points for life and death. Bildad’s suggestion is clear—those whose light is extinguished are the wicked, who die as a result of their iniquity.

Bildad extends his explanation of the fate of the wicked to incorporate the wicked en route. By using imagery that is familiar in biblical wisdom literature and the Psalms, the wicked are depicted as perpetually falling prey to their own schemes, which eventually results in their own demise. Hartley notes that this rhetoric seems to be directed at Job and states that it is “evident that Bildad thinks that Job has traveled a long way down this path, for he is tormented by apprehensive fears and all his offspring have died. But [Bildad] is also warning Job that although his pain is now great, the path on which he is traveling will result in a more horrible fate.”\(^{565}\) Despite Job’s not deserving to be characterized as a wicked person,\(^{566}\) it appears as though Bildad parallels Job’s experiences with those of the wicked so as to dissuade Job from his current path.\(^{567}\)

Nevertheless, Bildad’s rhetorical strategy transcends the verbiage of simply another trite warning already proffered in the other speeches. Bildad apparently makes no allowance for Job being righteous. Though it may be true that “Bildad’s point is not that Job is the quintessential

\(^{565}\) Hartley, Job, 281.
\(^{566}\) Longman, Job, 252.
\(^{567}\) Habel states, “(t)hus the poet has provided literary ties (especially through depicting Job as falling prey to his own schemes and by repeatedly being terrified) that relate Bildad’s topos on the world of the wicked to the experiences of Job and framing of the book.” Job, 285.
wicked man.” Bildad does suggest that Job has persisted in his iniquity to the point where “one has a feeling that he has given up on the likelihood that Job might be the pious man that Bildad had earlier characterized (8:16-22).” Seow further notes that in his portrayal of the fate of the wicked, Bildad “paints an extremely bleak picture of the place of the wicked, perhaps in the hope that Job might respond properly.”

Perhaps Bildad does hope Job will respond in penitence, yet Bildad’s lack of an appeal to reconcile with God, encouragement to plead for mercy, or to heed to Bildad’s advice, suggests that Bildad is content with letting Job remain in his condition. Habel rightly notes, that “(t)here is no longer any appeal to be blameless or any promise of restoration as in his previous discourse (ch. 8). The mood of Bildad has changed from being positive but defensive to being negative and condemnatory.” This insight leads the reader to consider that Bildad’s usage of imagery, metaphors, and merisms to condemn the wicked in chapter 18 might be his way of asserting that Job “is an evil and godless man.”

568 Seow, Job 1-21, 778.
569 Ibid.
570 Ibid.
571 Habel, Job, 289.
572 Ibid., 282.
573 Pope, Job, 137.
5 “The Destitute, the Dispossessed, and the Dead”—Zophar in Job 20:4-29

5.1 Introduction—vv. 1-4

Bildad’s harsh invective against the wicked in his second speech proved worthless in consoling Job. Still grieving, still virtuous—and hence, still honest—Job speaks out against his companions’ insinuations/accusations during his brief, yet passionate, response in chapter 19. Job recognizes that his friends are blaming him for his circumstances as opposed to comforting him in his circumstances. This, of course, is as a result of the conclusions of their retributive justice paradigm, which Job contends does not apply to his situation. Hence, Job has felt insulted because of his companions’ determination to promote a philosophical approach that contributes no appropriate solution to his dilemma.574

Therefore, Job appeals to his friends for compassion in chapter 19. He pleads that they have mercy upon him and, while consistent in maintaining his uprightness (19:6-13, and especially v. 21), insists that God is indeed responsible for his suffering. Nevertheless, Job’s companions are guilty of exalting themselves, attacking him, tormenting his soul, crushing him with their words, and pursuing him as though they were themselves God (19:2-5, 22). Job communicates that if his friends insist upon pursuing him, and thereby perverting justice, they themselves should fear the sword (19:28-29).

5.1.1 Zophar: Job’s Agitated Companion—vv. 1-3

Zophar, clearly disturbed by these remarks, appears offended at Job discrediting his wisdom. Zophar seems threatened by Job’s criticism of the system of just retribution, upon which he relies for his peace of mind concerning divine activity in the world order.576 Ironically, Zophar

574 Seow, Job 1-21, 836.
575 Ibid., Andersen, Job, 211; Hartley, Job, 211.
576 Clines, Job 1-20, 482.
sarcastically\textsuperscript{577} counters Job’s plea for mercy with a diatribe that focuses exclusively upon the judgment of the wicked and offers no appeal for repentance.\textsuperscript{578} Throughout his speech Zophar makes various rhetorical connections between Job’s current situation and the punishment of the wicked. This leaves little doubt that he considers Job among the impious, moving toward the same fate of the treacherous wicked described in chapter 20.\textsuperscript{579} Hakham rightly states that Zophar asserts in accordance with traditional wisdom: “That which has come upon Job has, and always will be, the fate of the wicked.”\textsuperscript{580} Zophar is prepared to support the traditional claim to wisdom and intends to present a sagacious response to Job’s remarks.\textsuperscript{581}

\textbf{5.1.2 Traditional Appeal to Traditional Wisdom—v. 4}

The initial step Zophar takes in order to demonstrate to Job that he is indeed wise is a straightforward appeal to traditional wisdom. In appealing to the primordial source of his teaching, Zophar follows the lead of Bildad (8:8-10) and Eliphaz (15:10, 18-19).\textsuperscript{582} Zophar establishes his competence to speak on the matter of retribution by candidly asking Job a rhetorical question. “Job,” Zophar inquires, “didn’t you know that from perpetuity, from the placing of humankind upon the earth . . . ?”\textsuperscript{583} Through this question, Zophar amplifies the claims of his colleagues. He does not simply say that his knowledge goes back to the ancestors, as Bildad and Eliphaz suggest.

\textsuperscript{577} Sarcasm is implied through Zophar’s rhetorical question \textit{הֲזֹאת יָׁד עְתָמִי} in v. 4. Wilson, \textit{Job}, 213.
\textsuperscript{578} Hartley, \textit{Job}, 309.
\textsuperscript{579} Wilson, \textit{Job}, 213.
\textsuperscript{580} Hakham, \textit{Job}, 153.
\textsuperscript{581} Hakham, \textit{Job}, 153, n. 4; Hartley, \textit{Job}, 300, n. 1;
\textsuperscript{582} Habel, \textit{Job}, 314-15; Hartley, \textit{Job}, 300.
\textsuperscript{583} Habel, \textit{Job}, 316.

The interrogative statement \textit{אָרֶץ מִנִי שִים אָדָם עֲלֵי} conspicuously lacks the negative particle \textit{לָא}. However, it is clear from context that this question presupposes an affirmative answer. The omission of the negative word here is explained by Gordis as an occasion in which the “speaker is animated by an all-powerful certainty of the truth of his contentions, so that he feels it inconceivable for anyone to differ, [and] he can neglect this sop to the ego of his audience. In these rare moments of unshakable certitude he dares to put his questions without troubling to conciliate his hearers, convinced that he will achieve the assent he craves in spite of the feeble resistance of their egos.” Robert Gordis, ”A Rhetorical Use of Interrogative Sentences in Biblical Hebrew,” \textit{AJSL} 49 (1933): 212-17, quotation taken from p. 214. See especially p. 217. See also Hakham, \textit{Job}, 153, n. 4; Hartley, \textit{Job}, 300, n. 1; Seow, \textit{Job 1-21}, 849.
Rather, Zophar invokes language reminiscent of the creation narrative 584 and Deut 4:32 585 to suggest that his knowledge goes back to the beginning of human existence. 586 Through this rhetoric, Zophar reminds Job of the veritable truth concerning his condition that he must heed—as far back as one can go in time, the retribution upon the wicked has been a fundamental part of the world order. 587 In this manner Zophar can claim a sort of expertise assuring the truthfulness of that which he affirms to be the fate of the wicked.

5.1.3 Ancient Near Eastern Affiliation

As noted above, the theological content of Zophar’s speech is similar to his friends’ doctrine of divine retribution. Since Zophar is the last of the three to dedicate a significant portion of his speech to the tragic fate of the wicked based upon traditional wisdom as the source of knowledge and authority, it is only natural that there would be harmony in thought, language, and imagery. In fact, Zophar’s theological outlook is not unlike other sections of the Bible in which retribution upon the wicked and disobedient is a prevalent theme (e.g., Psalms and Proverbs).

Zophar’s speech is unique because of the way the imagery conspicuously fits into an ancient Near Eastern literary context. In particular, Zophar uses imagery that, while not completely foreign to the biblical text, expressly corresponds to the ancient Near Eastern literary context in a way that sheds light upon how the concept of just retribution may have been understood in Job and the ancient Near Eastern cognitive environment. The similarities between Zophar’s imagery and rhetoric and that of other ancient Near Eastern compositions—especially, the Instructions of Amenemope, are so striking that they can hardly be overlooked. This is

584 Note the rhetoric with regard to God placing Adam in Eden in Gen 2:8, 15.
585 See the similar appeal to the occasion of the creation of mankind (כ שֶאָל-א לְנֵי הָאָדָם אָבָר-יִה לָעֲשָׂנָה לְאָדָם). Clines, Job 1-20, 484.
586 Seow, Job 1-21, 837.
587 Hartley, Job, 304.
especially so where the similarities pertain to the consequences of the wicked’s attempt to obtain and retain ill-gotten gain.

Accordingly, there are two objectives to this chapter. First, Zophar’s speech will be analyzed within the contexts of the dialogues of Job and the wider biblical context. This will be accomplished by means of observing the theological points made through imagery and pointing out other sections of the Bible that assist in understanding the doctrine of retribution portrayed through imagery. Second, Zophar’s speech will be examined in light of other ancient Near Eastern literature by paying close attention to how these compositions use similar imagery to relate their main points. This chapter will then conclude with suggestions concerning how to read Zophar’s speech in the light of comparable imagery from ancient Near Eastern compositions that express retribution theology.

5.2 Ill-Gotten Gain and its Consequences in Job

5.2.1 Job: The Exploitation of the Weak/Poor—vv. 5, 10, 19

In v. 4, Zophar concludes his introductory remarks by caustically, asking Job if he were aware of the teachings of traditional wisdom. In the second half of this rhetorical question (v. 5), Zophar asserts in two parallel statements that the joy of the wicked is but temporary (כו רִנְנ תֵרָג וְשִמְח תַחְנֵף עֲדֵי מִקָּרוֹב רְשָׁעִים). Zophar does not explicitly state from where the wicked derive their wealth (רְשָׁעִים מָשָּׁר וְשִמְח תַחְנֵף). The opinion that the joy of the godless is only temporary is disputed in Job’s subsequent speech, especially in 21:7–13, in which he adamantly claims that the wicked maintain their possessions all of the days of their life without due retribution. See chapter 6.
their short-lived merriment at this point, but a clue concerning why and how the wicked experience pseudo-happiness emerges in v. 10.

The progeny of the wicked, according to Zophar (v. 10a), are eventually responsible for repaying the poor (590 נַעֲרֵי יְרֵצֵי לִים וְיְרֵצֵי בָּנָיו). That which is repaid is not yet mentioned, but what is implied is the conduct of the wicked affecting subsequent generations as noted by Bildad in 18:16-17, 19. The parallel statement in v. 10b declares that the wicked’s hands return their own wealth (591 וְיָדָיו תָּשֵׁבְנָה אוֹנוֹ), presumably to the poor. Thus Zophar asserts that the wicked cannot impart their riches to their posterity, but rather, in a humiliating act conceding invalid ownership over their possessions, the irreligious and subsequent generations become enslaved to the exploited poor until they make restitution for the riches they unjustly attained.593

The reason for this punishment is directly stated in v. 19 where the metaphors desist, and it is unequivocally revealed that the wicked acquire their wealth by corrupt means. The wicked

590 Clines notes that to have the wicked’s children potentially restoring their ill-gotten gain seems out of place being that it is not a punishment on the same level as the type of destruction portrayed in vv. 7-9. Because of this, Clines suggests that the verb יָדָיו comes from יָדָי I and means to “seek the favor of.” This meaning would suggest that the “poorest of the poor, are reduced to begging their bread from the poor.” Clines, Job 1-20, 487. However, there are several verses after vv. 7-9, which do not meet the same level of destruction (i.e., vv. 15, 17-18, 21); therefore, this does not seem to be a credible reason on which to base one’s understanding of the word יָדָיו. I read the word יָדָיו from יָדָי II with Hakham to mean “to replace, restore” (HALOT, 1282) while recognizing that a wordplay could exist between the roots יָדָי and רָצַץ “to crush,” which subsequently appears in v. 19. Hakham, Job, 155; Seow, Job 1-21, 852.

591 Robert Gordis argues that the word יִתְנָי in this context is better translated as “offspring.” He bases this argument upon 1) the sons of the evil-doer being explicitly mentioned in 10a, 2) the claim that יִתְנָי could not refer to the dead person’s hand (v. 11), and 3) the Talmud’s usage of the word “knee” to mean “offspring.” Robert Gordis, "A Note on YAD," JBL 62 (1943): 343. Seow disagrees and is not convinced that יִתְנָי can mean “offspring” particularly because the parallels Gordis cites are unconvincing. Seow suggests that יִתְנָי is a natural extension of the wicked’s being. Seow states that “(t)he second line elaborates the first, explaining why the children of the wicked will end up being in their sorry state. The sons of the wicked are at the mercy of the poor as payback.” Seow, Job 1-21, 852. Regardless of whether the phrase יִתְנָי refers to the wicked person’s hand or his offspring the same sense prevails—ill-gotten gain must be returned to its rightful owner and does not remain in the possession of those who have attained it by participating in unlawful activity. Hartley sums up the sense in its theological context stating, “as just retribution, the evildoer’s massive wealth will go back to those from whom he has coerced it (cf. 5:5).” Hartley, Job, 305.

592 Hartley, Job, 305; Seow, Job 1-21, 839.

593 Hakham, Job, 155.

594 Clines, Job 1-20, 491.
oppress and abandon the poor (עָׁז ב ד לִים), having no mercy upon the impoverished.\textsuperscript{595} through which they obtain ill-gotten gain. The wicked violently seize other people’s property (בראש ניוו), taking possession of unlawful wealth by means of thievery, and leaving their victims in a state of poverty. This is a grave sin according to Zophar, and thus the consequence of the wicked attaining ill-gotten gain by corrupt means finds expression in their inability build up their “stolen house”\textsuperscript{596} and pass their riches on to their progeny. As Habel states, according to Zophar, “the touchstone of true ‘evil’ is oppression of the weak (v. 19).”\textsuperscript{597} Contrary to the wicked passing along their ill-gotten gain to their offspring, Zophar asserts that those whom the wicked have victimized and forced into poverty are rightfully recompensed by the wicked and their children.\textsuperscript{598}

This idea of the impious’ progeny being deprived of assets as a result of their parents’ unrighteousness is a common retribution theme and is alluded to in Job in a number of texts.\textsuperscript{599}

Initially, Eliphaz implies this concept in 4:10, where the cubs of the lioness are scattered without a parental provider. In this same speech Eliphaz elaborates upon the consequences of the life of a fool (אֱוִיל [5:3]) and not only notes that the fool’s children have no protection from potential abusers, but that the fool’s possessions are sought by others (5:4-5). This motif continues in 15:29, where Eliphaz asserts that the riches of the wicked will not increase.\textsuperscript{600} Hence, Eliphaz suggests

\begin{footnotes}

\footnote{596} Hakham, \textit{Job}, 156.

\footnote{597} Habel, \textit{Job}, 318.

\footnote{598} Seow, \textit{Job I-21}, 839.

\footnote{599} See e.g., Ps 17:9-14, in which the psalmist petitions God to deliver him from the wicked—those whom the psalmist perceives as prospering and who are able to leave an inheritance to their offspring (וְהִנִּיחוּ יִתְרָׁם לְעוֹלְלֵיהֶם). Thus, implicit in this psalm is the idea that only those who are righteous should be able to pass on their affluence.

\footnote{600} See section 3.4.
\end{footnotes}
that the impious cannot maintain their ill-gotten gain and cannot consequently bestow it to the next generation.

The theme relating to the impious and their fleeting wealth is prominent in Proverbs as well. In Proverbs, those who take advantage of the poor for illicit gain ironically end up in poverty (Prov 22:16). In contrast to the villain, the righteous person is concerned with the rights of the poor while the wicked (רָשָׁע) have no such understanding of or interest in the weak (Prov 29:7). Those who give to the poor are the ones who experience true prosperity (נוֹתֵן לָרָשָׁע אֵין מ חְסוֹר) while those who ignore their distress are cursed (Prov 28:27). In Proverbs, concern for the impoverished engenders blessing, whereas those who ignore the destitute eventually become one of them.

5.2.2 Job: The Imagery of Swallowing—vv. 12-18, 20-21a

5.2.2.1 The Situation Turns Sour—vv. 12-14

As the wicked insist on perpetuating their misdeeds, they revel in their wickedness, which seems to be sweet in their mouths (םָהְחִידֶנָּה לְשֹנְךָ). The impious take pleasure in their immorality by metaphorically savoring it under their tongues as if it were a delicious morsel of food. This imagery of eating related to the wicked taking pleasure in their misdeeds recalls Eliphaz’s comment in 15:27 in which he depicts the wicked as overindulgent and bloated, covering their sinews with fat. As noted in chapter 3, the overweight and wicked person is properly understood as having attained his possessions by unjust means in the Bible. This appears to be precisely what Zophar communicates in this context as he proceeds with a metaphor related to eating.

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601 Rowley, Job, 143; Habel, Job, 317; Clines, Job 1-20, 489.
602 Hakham likewise notes that the evil (רָשָׁע) should be understood as relating to thievery in this context; Job, 155.
Before long, the wicked’s appetizing situation turns sour, and in v. 13 Zophar turns from people’s temporary delight in wickedness to the reality of their punishment. The godless remain stubborn and refuse to depart from their stealing (יִלָּחַד עָלֶיהָ וְלֹא יְבֹנָה), figuratively detaining their comestibles (i.e., ill-gotten gain) in their mouths (תָּמִנָּה). Despite their obstinate struggle to maintain their food, the wicked inevitably become increasingly ill as a result of delighting in iniquity. The vileness of their misdeeds festers in their bowls (לֹא מָכַשְׂרָה וְלֹא נְחֱפָּה), plaguing the wicked as though it were a poisonous infusion into their bellies (יִמְנָעֶנָּה בְּתוֹךְ חִכיּ). Despite their obstinate struggle to maintain their food, the wicked inevitably become increasingly ill as a result of delighting in iniquity. The vileness of their misdeeds festers in their bowls (לֹא מָכַשְׂרָה וְלֹא נְחֱפָּה), plaguing the wicked as though it were a poisonous infusion into their bellies (יִמְנָעֶנָּה בְּתוֹךְ חִכיּ).

5.2.2.2  The Wicked and their Wealth—v. 15-16

Zophar’s speech progresses in v. 15, where for the first time that which the wicked consumes is explicitly identified as wealth. The riches that the wicked attain and “ingest” through exploitation of the weak (read in light of v. 19) become an abhorrent venom which the stomach of the perpetrator cannot withstand. Through the infusion of poison into their bellies (cf. v. 14b), the godless are compelled to vomit up the immoral gain in which they once momentarily delighted (גוּל חַלֶת וּנְקִאֶ). Again, Zophar’s claim is in accord with traditional wisdom—in particular, that of the biblical proverbs which repeatedly state the futility of earthly riches gained by deceit. Especially noteworthy is Prov. 20:17 in which ill-gotten material gain is likened to food of deceit (לֶחֶם שָׁקֶר). This food seems to be sweet at first, but when ingested it fills the mouth with gravel.

In accordance with traditional wisdom, enjoyment of ill-gotten gain runs contrary to the divine world order. As Seow puts it, “(t)he deeds of the wicked naturally bring consequences, but the

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603 Dennis Pardee argues by citing a plethora of ancient sources that the difficult phrase קָרָוֵרָת פְּתָנִים indeed came to take on the meaning of “serpent’s venom.” See "Merōrāt-Petanîm 'Venom' in Job 20:14," ZAW 91 (1979): 401-16, especially pp. 415-16.

604 Hakham, Job, 156.

605 “Evil is like a delicacy that one eats and savors before it turns bad and those who have consumed it vomit.” Longman, Job, 269. Cf. the vomiting associated with accepting hospitality of a miser in Prov. 23:8. Hartley, Job, 306. See also discussions in Greenstein, “Metaphors in the Poetry of Job,” 185-86, as well as “Features of Language,” 95-96.

606 Prov 11:4 and 21:6 are others that deal speak to the futility of earthly riches—especially those gained by deceit.
consequences are no mere happenstance, rather, they are part of divine will to maintain more order in the world.\textsuperscript{607}

This fact becomes evident when Zophar straightaway attributes the retribution to God. This unpleasant regurgitation episode is anything but fortuitous or brought about by natural causes. As the wicked strive to dishonestly obtain wealth they are made to lose that illicit gain by God. God is the punitive authority who casts the ill-gotten riches out of the criminal’s belly (מִבִּטְנוֹ יֹרִשֶׁנּוּ אֵל [v. 15b]).\textsuperscript{608} Though God is the cause of the vomiting, and hence the divine retribution model is still intact, it is also the wicked’s insatiable desire to ingest that yields them their greatest problem.\textsuperscript{609} The wicked immediately return to their eating, but instead of ingesting the wealth they strived to acquire, divine judgment sentences them to suck the venom of poisonous serpents (רֹאֶשׁ-ׁפְתָּנִים יִינָךְ [v. 16]). This venom emitted from the mouth of a snake brings about the demise of the wicked (כָּלַחְתָּה לְשׁוֹן אֵפֶעֶה), as it is consumed by the overindulgent devourer whose eating ironically becomes his undoing. Taking the possessions of someone else ultimately leads to a sudden death like that which is caused by the unexpected appearance of a poisonous snake triumphant in attack (v. 16).

5.2.2.3 The Abundance of Wealth Withheld—v. 17

Paradoxically, sucking deadly venom is the opposite of what the wicked foresee when bingeing upon the property of the impoverished.\textsuperscript{610} The plundering of the property of the weak should, at least, bring about the enjoyment of property experienced by the weak. Nevertheless,
evildoers are cursed and deprived of the goods of a prospering land. The wicked will not see flowing streams (בִפְלַגְוֹת). The curds and honey that are characteristic of a prospering land will not flow as expected (נֵרֶא-א ל). As Rowley notes, “(t)he time of enjoyment to which the wicked looked forward, [they] will not live to see.” The wicked will die, unable to enjoy the basic produce of the land.

Verse 17 has been a challenge for interpreters in that the first line is noticeably shorter than the second and it appears that any parallelism between the two lines is defective. In addition, 17b contains the odd juxtaposition of נֵרֶא-א ל. As a result of these issues, some commentators suggest that the word “oil” be read instead of נֵרֶא-א ל rendering the phrase רָםְצִי בִפְלַגְוֹת “rivers/streams of (fresh) oil” in v. 17a which serves as a much better parallel to “streams of honey and curds” in v. 17b.

This type of emendation would surely provide the expected parallelism of this verse, yet there is no textual evidence that supports either an emendation to שֶמֶן or נֵרֶא-א ל. Without any textual evidence, one might more reasonably consider Ball’s suggestion that נֵרֶא-א ל might simply be a variant of נֵרֶא or a gloss on נֵרֶא-א ל. Seow, on the other hand, takes the MT into consideration and regards the interpretive problem as primarily a text critical issue. This textual problem is clarified, in

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611 See Hartley, Job, 306: “In Palestine oil, honey, and curds, along with wheat, were the staples. With oil a person anoints himself, cooks his food, and lights his dwelling.”
612 The phrase נֵרֶא-א ל appears to be the case of the jussive being used to express strong negation. GKC §109e. See Clines, Job 1-20, 475.
613 Rowley points out that נֵרֶא-א ל “curled milk” indicates some sort of refreshment based upon the context of Judg. 5:25. Rowley, Job, 143. Additionally, the usage of the words נֵרֶא-א ל in reverse order in Isa 7:15, 22 seems to suggest that they were staple foods in the land. See Hartley, Job, 306; Clines, Job, 491. It is reasonable to understand this phrase in light of the very similar חָלָׁב וּדְבָׁש “milk and honey” which clearly indicates a prosperous land (See e.g., Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; [of Egypt] 16:13-14; Deut 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh 5:6; Jer 11:5; 32:22; Ezek 20:6, 15). For the phrase נֵרֶא-א ל essentially indicating prosperity see Pope, Job, 152; Clines, Job 1-20, 490; Wilson, Job, 217.
614 Rowley, Job, 143.
615 Hartley, Job, 306.
616 Dhorme, Job, 297; Pope, Job, 152, who also suggests שֶמֶן as a viable alternative; Rowley, Job, 143; Hartley, Job, 301-02, n. 10; Longman, Job, 265, n. 5.
617 Ball, Job, 285. See, for example, Ps 78:9.
Seow’s opinion, through the Vulgate’s reading of “tributaries of the river” for בִפְל גּוֹת נְהֵר. This is an indication that should be read as part of 17a as בִפְל גּוֹת נָּהְר, “tributaries of a river.” In this reading, the י of נְהֵר was confused with an epexegeticalו in v. 17b (i.e., וּנהלי דבש) and thus, the image of “tributaries of the river” suggests the distribution of abundance.”

It does seem that the idea of “abundance” is what is being alluded to in this context. With this in mind, the literal translation of the MT, “He will not see the channels of rivers of streams of honey and milk” (Habel) carries some weight in that it amplifies the great amount of prosperity that will be denied to the wicked. The construct chain is atypical, but it is understandable and has biblical precedent. Wilson notes that, “the words for flowing water sources pile up in this verse, emphasizing the abundance of honey and cream that are being cut off from the wicked.”

Despite the interpretive difficulties in this verse, it is unmistakable that Zophar reasserts one of the most basic tenets of retribution theology in that the wicked will not experience the blessings of abundance due to the righteous.

5.2.2.4 The Regurgitated Return—v. 18

Indeed, the wicked must restore and cannot consume their ill-gotten gain, though they insatiably strive to do so (וְלֹא יִבְלָע מֵשִיב יָּגָע [v. 18]). In v. 15 Zophar states that the godless consume their wealth and subsequently vomit. Now, Zophar asserts that the wicked cannot even swallow their ill-gotten gain. Yet, if the wicked cannot swallow and thereby maintain their wealth, how can they vomit it up and thereby return their illicit gain?

618 Seow, Job 1-21, 854.
619 Cf. GKC §130e-f.
620 Bold his. Wilson, Job, 218.
621 The fact that the Biblical Hebrew word בלע—most commonly translated as “to swallow”—came to take on a secondary meaning figurative of injurious action has been well established. In this we see how similar verbs of consumption, which when combined with an iniquitous person have come to take on secondary meanings that distinctly refer to the eradication of possessions. See BDB,118 piel, 2, as well as HALOT, 134 piel, 2. Based on Arabic language cognates, Alfred Guillaume suggests that the root בלע is better understood as “to afflict” in Job 2:3 and “to distress” or “to injure” in Job 10:8, 37:20. "Note on the Root bl̄;", JTS 13 (1962): 321.
Zophar is apparently communicating that, despite the wicked’s striving to swallow ill-gotten gain, they cannot manage to successfully ingest in the first place and, therefore, cannot keep their food down. That is to say—the ill-gotten gain of the wicked never truly belongs to them. The wicked do not ultimately swallow their food (v. 18) in the sense that they regurgitate that which they have strived to ingest (v. 15).\textsuperscript{622} The manner in which the wicked are depicted as returning their profit (מֵשִיב יָׁגָע) to its proper ownership by not being able to swallow (יִבְלָׁע) their “food,” is precisely the image portrayed by Zophar in v. 15a.\textsuperscript{624} This return of the wicked’s “profit” is an obvious demonstration of how they will not prosper from, and cannot enjoy, the wealth of their unlawful transaction (כְחֵיל).

5.2.2.5  \textit{Immense Appetite—vv. 20-21a}

The punishment of the impious does not remedy the essence of the wicked’s malfeasance. The wicked are insatiable and forever wanting to ingest the property of others regardless of the consequences. This bent for perpetual transgression to forcefully possess wealth is evident in vv. 20-21a, in which Zophar describes the conduct of the wicked in three consecutive clauses which

\textsuperscript{622} Clines, \textit{Job 1-20}, 475. These slightly different statements make the same point in suggesting that the gain of the wicked person—which he endeavors to ingest and possess—is ephemeral. Longman, \textit{Job}, 269. The depiction of the wicked constantly eating yet never being able to keep down their food sheds light upon the analogous and ironic description of the wicked experiencing hunger in Prov 13:25. The wicked are cast as obese because they are never ending consumers. They are always starving because they cannot keep down their ill-gotten gain. See elaboration of the motif concerning the ephemerality of possessions attained through illicit means in section 5.2.3.

\textsuperscript{623} See Greenstein, “Use of Akkadian,” 353, for an explanation of how the unique noun form יָׁגָע, "profit" derived from the verb יָׁגָע "to toil."

\textsuperscript{624} Clines, \textit{Job 1-20}, 475.

\textsuperscript{625} Commentators are split as to whether to read יֵשִיב with the א as represented in the MT, or to read along with several other manuscripts which have the easily confused א. Those who consider the א as the superior reading (e.g., Hakham, \textit{Job}, 156; Seow, \textit{Job}, 855), evidently understand 18b to convey that the non-enjoyment of the wicked is in accordance with the proportion of this wealth. However, those who prefer reading the א (e.g., Dhorme, \textit{Job}, 297; Habel, \textit{Job}, 312; Hartley, \textit{Job}, 302, n. 11; Greenstein, “Use of Akkadian,” 352-353, n. 81), understand 18b to mean that the wicked do not enjoy any of their wealth. See Clines, \textit{Job 1-20}, 475. Whether accepting the emendation or not, the point is the same: the wicked will not enjoy prosperity.
relate to the motif of swallowing. The voracious behavior depicted by Zophar in these lines is what inevitably brings about further retribution upon the wicked in vv. 21b ff. 626

There is no serenity for the wicked until everything they desire is in their belly. Contrary to typical eating, which provides the eater a sense of tranquility (i.e., Prov. 17:1 [ dof חֲרֵבָה מַעֲרָבָה - הַשֵּׁלֶד]), the belly of the wicked is the core of their discontentment because of its penchant for overindulgence. 627 The wicked cannot experience peace until they attain those things which they crave. 628 The fact that they are gluttons whose determination to illicitly secure wealth is further evident in that no coveted item escapes their craving (Thus, לֹא יָד תֹּבוּל). by claiming that the wicked attain their gain through abuse of the poor (vv. 18-19), Zophar portrays them as doggedly harrying the possessions of the already impoverished.

This brazenness culminates in v. 21a, in which the appetite of the wicked overwhelms everything in their vicinity, leaving no remnant. The depravity and ruthlessness of the wicked in this context has caused some interpreters to suggest that humans are the object of their devouring—either by way of people’s possessions being eaten, or by they themselves falling prey to cannibalistic tendencies of the wicked. For example, Hartley notes that the word שָׁרִיד “survivor” always refers to a person rather than possessions and therefore translates 21a as, “No one has survived his devouring.” 631 Hartley proceeds to state that “no one is safe from such a person’s plots to dominate and to extort,” 632 suggesting that there is no survivor of the figurative

626 Clines, Job 1-20, 493.
627 Ibid.
628 As Clines notes, the comparable phrase לֹא יָד תֹּבוּל in Isa 59:8 confirms that תֹּבוּל functions as a noun in this context. Ibid., 476. See also Hakham, Job, 158, especially the examples cited in note 28, and Seow, Job 1-21, 856.
629 The phrase מַעֲרָבָה is understood to consist of a partitive מ, the qal passive of מַעֲרָבָה “to desire” (BDB, 326), and the 3rd person masculine singular possessive pronoun. Collectively this means “of his desired (thing).” The idea is that no object that the wicked desire can evade their grasp. Seow, Job 1-21, 856. See also Clines, Job 1-20, 476-77.
630 Reading as piel definition 2 in BDB, 572, “to let escape.”
631 Hartley, Job, 302, n. 16.
632 Ibid., 307.
consumption of the wicked upon their possessions. In this interpretation, everyone who is in the proximity of the wicked is affected by their thievishness.

Transcending the idea of figurative consumption, some commentators understand Zophar to say that there is no physical survivor in the vicinity of the wicked. Rowley asserts that in v. 21a “(i)t is not [the wicked’s] gluttony for food, but his eagerness to swallow up the weak, which is in mind.” 633 Seow concurs, and upon emphasizing that this term שָׁרִיד is used only elsewhere in the Bible of human beings, he states that, “(t)he wicked [are] even more pernicious than interpreters have assumed. Greed is portrayed in cannibalistic terms. Human lives are at risk because of human discontentment.” 634 According to this interpretation, the wicked have given themselves over to their immorality to the point where their voracious appetite transcends the metaphorical realm and extends into the physical dimension in which they participate in the abominable act of cannibalism. 635

This explanation rightly points out that Zophar depicts the wicked as extremely wanton and irrational. Nevertheless, the immediate context of Zophar’s speech strongly points away from שָׁרִיד indicating a literal human being. The verbs of consumption that Zophar uses in chapter 20 are all paired with words that refer to possessions rather than people (i.e., in v. 15 בָּלַע is paired with חַלֵל, and in v. 18 בָּלַע is used with יָדָן). Additionally it is likely that אכַל, as is used in v. 21a, describes the devastation of the physical goods desired by the eater in in v. 20. This coincides with this same verb’s usage in 22:20 in which the wealth is consumed by fire (ותרה אכל אש). The reader is therefore compelled to understand the reference to consumption in v. 21a in the same manner because there is no apparent indication that the metaphor has been dropped. Lastly, Clines

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633 Rowley, Job, 144.
634 Seow, Job 1-21, 843. The literal approach is also taken by Hakham, Job, 158.
635 See Lev 26:29, Deut 28:53-57, Jer 19:9, Lam 2:20; 4:10 and Ezek 5:10, where cannibalism is a harsh punishment decreed by God for disobedience. A story indicating that this came to pass during a time of disobedience is recorded in 2 Kgs 6:28-29.
points out that those who understand שָׁרִיד literally as a person ignore the phrase ע ל-כֵּן in the second half of the verse. That is to say, the consequence explicated in v. 21b (i.e., the ephemerality of the wicked’s possessions) is as a result (ע ל-כֵּן) of there being no “survivor” for consumption.

Thus, it is best to understand v. 21a as Zophar’s attempt to communicate that there is nothing left for the consumption of the wicked. Strictly speaking, the wicked’s untamable lust for things not theirs leads to them to endlessly consume all that they desire until there is nothing else left. This reading understands the phrase אֵין-שָׁרִיד לְאָׁכְלוֹ as hyperbolically relating the tremendous covetousness of the wicked, and not as a reference to cannibalism. Clines’ provides insight into reading this phrase in its context, stating, “(i)n light of the food metaphor in vv. 12-19, where it transpired in vv. 15 and 19 that the crime of the evildoer was not really gluttony but avarice for the possessions of others, we may be sure that the same is the case here also, though nothing says so explicitly.”

5.2.3 Job: The Ephemerality of Possessions—vv. 21b, 26-28

5.2.3.1 “His Profit will not Prosper!”—v. 21b

Accompanying the wicked’s greed within the paradigm of just retribution, is their fleeting affluence. Zophar explicitly states, and reinforces through repetition, the traditional wisdom that worldly prosperity obtained through exploiting the defenseless cannot perpetually remain in the possession of the immoral. The prosperity of the wicked will not flourish because their gain is ill-gotten and thus, the godless ironically end up destitute. This hardship is a result of their voracious consumption of illicit goods as mentioned in preceding verses

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636 Clines, Job 1-20, 477.
637 Ibid., 493.
638 Tur-Sinai notes, “Since Job has expressed the view that there is no justice in the world, Zophar, doubtless relying on his own experience and the reports of former generations, tries to prove again that the evil-doer’s prosperity will not endure. He must return his ill-gotten gains and will eventually perish.” Job, 322.
639 See the usage of the word טוּב in reference to prosperity in Gen 24:10 (עֶלְיוֹן פָּדָה טוּב וְכָל).
(vv. 12-18, 20ff.). The consequences of their overreaching greed eventually overwhelms them, leaving the wicked with nothing.\(^{640}\)

Poverty as the fate of the wicked is not a novelty in the dialogues of Job, nor in wisdom literature in general. Eliphaz makes an analogous claim regarding the wicked not being able to prosper in his description of the corpulent man in 15:27-29. In this text Eliphaz not only claims that the riches of the wicked are so short-lived that they have no opportunity to use them to multiply their wealth, but also that the wicked end up completely destitute and waiting for imminent judgment.\(^{641}\) Zophar resumes this motif of fiscal retribution yet expands Eliphaz’s comments to emphasize the reason as to why the wealth of the wicked is fleeting—namely, because it is obtained through illicit means. However, both Eliphaz’s and Zophar’s claims about the momentariness of ill-gotten wealth are merely examples of the standard paradigm regarding the ephemerality of illegitimate wealth in biblical wisdom literature—particularly, that which is taught in Proverbs.

Select proverbs instruct that the wicked attain their wealth through immoral means and thereby provoke judgment upon themselves (1:13, 19, 31).\(^{642}\) Acquiring dishonest wages generates retribution which causes the possessions of the wicked to be worthless and ephemeral (10:2, 16; 13:11; 21:6). The dishonest wages of the wicked only bring them great trouble, but the righteous are those who are guaranteed a profitable return (11:18; 15:6). Paradoxically, the righteous financially prosper from the dispossessed wealth of the sinner (13:21-22 [צָוף ל צ דִיק חֵיל חוֹטֵא]). The reason for this is that, according to Proverbs, divine justice requires God to provide wealth for the needs of the righteous while thwarting the desires of the wicked (3:9-10; 10:3, 22; 13:25).\(^{643}\) The righteous are guaranteed generous compensation, perhaps even at the hand of the

\(^{640}\) Rowley, Job, 144.
\(^{641}\) See chapter 3.
\(^{642}\) See also Ps 37:14-15.
\(^{643}\) This is also clearly depicted in Ps 37:18-22.
wicked. Conversely, those who illegitimately amass riches are assured their own demise by invoking just punishment. Thus, taken in the context of the dialogues of Job as well as Proverbs, Zophar’s comments with regard to the wicked not prospering in v. 21b is a lucid reminder of the traditional wisdom teaching on wealth and wickedness.

5.2.3.2 Divine Vengeance upon the Wicked’s Possessions—vv. 26-28

5.2.3.2.1 Destruction through Darkness—v. 26

This reminder of the penalty upon the riches of the wicked develops into an outright admonition of divine retribution upon the treasures of the impious by the end of Zophar’s speech. The treasures that the wicked ostensibly possess are relegated to darkness (כָּל-חֹשֶךְ טָּמֻן לִצְפוּנָיו). As previously noted, imagery relating to darkness symbolizes destruction and death throughout the dialogues of Job. In stating that the darkness is hidden (טָּמֻן), Zophar appropriates the same term that Bildad uses in 18:10 to speak of the concealment of the traps that entangle the impious. Now darkness, representing destruction, lies in wait to waylay the treasures of the wicked.

Zophar initially portrays destruction swiftly befalling the treasures of the wicked in the form of an unfanned fire consuming them and everything they have. The mechanism of destruction (i.e., the fire) is not kindled or maintained by humans, and thus Zophar depicts the spontaneous fire as an instrument of divine retribution. According to Zophar,
supernatural intervention accomplishes just retribution through God’s fire devouring the wicked and their treasures. This is the ultimate ironic depiction of the gluttonous wicked—who are depicted throughout Zophar’s speech as perpetually interested in consuming—ultimately dying from being consumed. Notwithstanding, the devastation extends until there is nothing left in the residence of the wicked.

Devastation is certain according to Zophar. Yet, how exactly the phrase relates this devastation is unclear. This uncertainty is predominantly a result of the difficult word יֵר ע. Most interpreters agree that יֵר ע is derived from the root רע"י "to feed, graze"—as opposed to an imperfect where one would expect ירעה. Seow contends that the natural sense of the jussive should be retained. According to this interpretation, Zophar expresses his desire for fire, which is already used in the masculine gender in the previous line, to devour who.mever and whatever is left in the tent of the wicked.

It is certainly reasonable to picture Zophar passionately expressing his own faith in the system of just retribution, thus articulating a personal desire that the wicked experience what he

649 See, for example, how God’s fire (אש) is used to consume (אכל) the collaborators in Korah’s rebellion in Num 16:35 (אש יצאה מִאֵת יְהוָה וּתֹאכַל אֵת ה חֲמִשִּים וּמָאת יִם אִיש). Clines notes that in this context could refer to “his treasured ones, his loved ones” citing the incident of Korah’s punishment in Num 16:31-35, where refers to physical possessions as well as Korah’s company. See Hartley, *Job*, 308, n.40.
650 Hartley notes that in this context could refer to “his treasured ones, his loved ones” citing the incident of Korah’s punishment in Num 16:31-35, where refers to physical possessions as well as Korah’s company. See Hartley, *Job*, 308, n.40.
651 Clines, *Job 1-20*, 496.
652 An exception is Hakham who understands the word from רע II “to break”—an Aramaicized version of the Hebrew רע. BDB, 949, 954; HALOT, 1270, 1285, 1983. Hakham, *Job*, 161. Hakham, however, reads this in the niphal paradigm with the survivor יֵר ע as the subject. It appears, however, that the context indicates that the fire is the subject and reading יֵר ע as an active verb better parallels יֵר ע תְאָכְלֵהוּ.
653 Clines, *Job 1-20*, 496.
654 And hence, paralleled with the root אכל. Dhorme, *Job*, 305; BDB, 944; HALOT, 1259.
would consider to be their deserved fate. However, there is quite a strong precedent for jussives being used in a non-collateral sense in the Bible. Therefore, it is imperative to consider this usage a plausible option for יֵר ע in this context. Accordingly, other commentators understand the jussive to essentially have the same function as the imperfect in this context. Dhorme, for example, suggests that the jussive is used because of the inevitability of the action. He notes that the verb יֵר ע parallels וּתְאָׁכְלֵה, and suggests that Zophar states with certainty that fire will feed on survivors in the tent of the wicked. Thus, the use of the jussive may not exclusively reflect a personal desire for the consumption of the wicked and all of their possessions, but also to demonstrate the level of confidence that Zophar possesses in his assertions that this fate will definitely happen to the wicked. The wicked and all they possess will unquestionably meet their ominous fate of being consumed.

5.2.3.2.2 The Witnesses of the Heavens and the Earth—v. 27

Divine involvement in retribution for the wicked is further pointed out by Zophar in calling the heavens and the earth as witnesses to their guilt (וֹיִג לוּ שָׁמַיִם עֲנָוִיתֶיהוֹ מִתְקָוָמָה לוֹ [v. 27]). The clandestine iniquities which the wicked presume they secretly commit are revealed by the heavens and the earth as a manifestation of God calling the wicked to account. Hakham interestingly relates this imagery to Gen 27:28 and Lev 26:19-20, which speak literally of physical blessings of the heaven and the earth, maintaining that the suggestion behind Zophar’s reference to these entities concerns the righteous being blessed with their produce, and the wicked being deprived of these blessings.

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656 See GKC §109k for jussives used with no collateral sense—particularly those at the beginning of sentences.
657 Dhorme, Job, 304-05. See also Hartley, Job, 303, n. 28; Clines, Job 1-20, 479, 496.
658 Hakham, Job, 161.
The privation of the physical blessings of the heavens and the earth is indeed a fitting consequence for the ungodly within the just retribution paradigm. More expressly in this context, the heavens and the earth function as witnesses to the iniquity of the evildoer. Job previously cried out for the heavens and the earth to reveal his innocence (16:18-19). Zophar responds to Job and claims that the heavens and the earth indeed testify—not to his innocence but rather to iniquity, thereby justifying the calamity brought upon the wicked. If Job were granted the trial for which he so eagerly yearns before the heavenly court, the heavens and the earth would only bear testimony proving him guilty.659

The notion of the heavens and the earth serving as witnesses is a common motif in the Bible. In the Torah, the heavens and the earth are summoned as witnesses to statements concerning divine mandates. For instance Moses, calls upon the heavens and the earth to bear witness on his behalf (הָשָׁמֶשֶׁת וְהָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי-פִי) [Deut 32:1], concerning his speech (אָמֶרֵת), and instruction (לִקְחִי [Deut 32:2]). Additionally, Moses repeatedly states that if the nation were to turn to idolatry after entering the land, the heavens and the earth would bear witness against the people of Israel (ה עִידֹתִי בָּכֶם ה יְהוָֽה דִּבֵּר אֶת-ה שָׁמ יִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ [Deut 4:24]). Moses warns the nation twice more in, Deut 30:19 as well as 31:28, using similar rhetoric, concerning the heavens and earth witnessing their rebellious behavior against God.

This calling upon the heavens and the earth to attest to rebellion comes to pass in Isa 1:2, where the prophet summons them to hearken—namely, as witnesses—to the word of the Lord (שִמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ אִמְרָתִי [אָמֶרָתִי] אֵל) with which God accuses Israel. Hence in Isaiah, the Mosaic warning of the invocation of the heavens and the earth is in fact exercised in the same way that it is in Job—that is to say, the heavens and the earth are “cosmic witnesses [which] attest to the guilt

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659 Hartley, Job, 308.
of the wicked.” Through this imagery Zophar communicates that, despite the fact that Job is not willing to admit any guilt, the heavens and the earth will expose him and subject him to even greater disgrace than that which is noted in 18:20, where Bildad states that the wicked would be publicly humiliated because of their iniquity. The focal point of Zophar’s claim concerning the heavens and the earth is not simply related to the return of physical goods but rather to the assertion that the evildoers’ crimes are so severe that the heavens and the earth are forced to recognize them and testify against them.

5.2.3.2.3 Liquidation by Way of Water—v. 28

Upon the heavens and the earth exposing the iniquity of the evildoer, God’s wrath is kindled as manifested through divine judgment upon the household of the wicked. A straightforward reading of v. 28a finds the possessions being removed from their custody as divine retribution. This dispossession of the wicked’s property accords with just retribution theology as well as functions as a major theme throughout Zophar’s second speech (i.e., vv. 10, 15, 18). Thus, upon reading the first line of v. 28, it appears as though Zophar is using conventional language once again to denounce the goods/wealth of the houses of the wicked. This is the interpretation of Ibn Ezra who, understanding the term בית to refer to the people of a given household, proposes that ויָבוּל בית could refer to the produce reaped by the members of the home. This reading portrays the wealth of an entire household begin carried off as retribution.

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660 Seow, Job 1-21, 845-46. See also Wilson, Job, 220.
661 Clines, Job 1-20, 497.
662 This reading understands coming from "to remove, depart" being used intransitively. BDB, 162.
However, this understanding is challenged upon reading v. 28b. When the reader comes upon the word ניגרות—a term relating to a stream—the expected parallelism with v. 28a is foiled. This difficulty has brought about a number of proposals which predominantly suggest repointing the vowels of יובל in order to reconcile the two lines of v. 28. Wilson notices the parallel rhetoric between v. 28a and Jer 17:8 (עלה-מיש-והנה) and notes that simply repointing the consonantal text from יובל to יובל “stream” would create balance to the verse. This would certainly provide some clarity, being that יובל is in direct parallel with מים in Jer 17:8—despite יובל only being used here in the Bible. Seow proposes a slightly different vocalization of יובל, and alters the vocalization to yebel. This suggestion is based upon the impression that יובל should be understood in light of יבלי-מים the “water channels” in Isa 30:25 and 44:4—again providing a more anticipated parallel to ניגרות. These representative opinions give a sense of the prevailing view, holding that there must be a reference to some sort of stream in v. 28a which parallels the waters of v. 28b.

Other commentators have searched for different potential layers of meaning to the word יובל in order to harmonize the two lines of v. 28. Anticipating parallelism, Pope contends that יובל cannot mean “produce” but, rather, must be understood in light of Semitic philology—particularly, considering Arabic words like وبلا a “violent rain, consisting of large raindrops,” and the

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664 The phrase 입יא אפפ refers to a period of time in which God’s judgment is executed. See Isa 13:13; Zeph 2:2-3; Ps 110:5; Lam 1:12; 2:1; 2:21-22. With regard to the phrase 입יא אפפ in 20:28 Good states, “‘On the wrathful day’…refers, it seems, to God’s angry intervention…” Good, Turns of Tempest, 263.
665 This the only time ניגרות is used in this form in the Bible. Nevertheless, see BDB, 620, and the verses listed there for affirmation that ניגרות in all likelihood relates to a stream.
666 There is also some discussion with regard to the root and vocalization of the word יובל (see Pope Job, 153; Clines, Job 1-21, 479; Seow, Job 1-21, 862), but suggestions for reading this word are normally contingent upon the commentator’s interpretation of יובל.
667 Wilson, Job, 221.
668 That is not counting the proper name יובל which appears in Gen. 4:21.
669 Clines, Job 1-20, 498.
670 Lane, 3048.
Akkadian *bubbulu* (*bibbulu*) “flood.”\(^{671}\) Thus, Pope considers the actual vocalization of the word to be less consequential than the meaning discernible through philological comparison.\(^{672}\) Ultimately, Pope suggests that it is best to understand יְבוּל as essentially מֵבָל “flood”\(^{673}\)—another related word pertaining to an abundance of water.\(^{674}\) Hakham is a bit less specific in his philological analysis, but nevertheless notes that יְבוּל closely relates to other words depicting the flow of water (i.e., מָּיִם, מָּיִם, מָּיִם). This suggests, according to Hakham, that the best reading relates a stream of water washing away the house of the wicked.\(^{675}\)

It does seem appropriate that a stream would parallel נִגָּרְוָה of v. 28b because this word makes little sense isolated at the beginning of the phrase. However, what is particularly interesting is how several commentators initially concede to a straightforward reading of v. 28a, which they subsequently change in light of the information they are presented with as they continue reading in v. 28b. For example, Hartley states that v. 28a “may be translated ‘the possessions of his house will be taken into exile’.” Nonetheless, Hartley is compelled to change this reading to reflect the parallelism with נִגָּרְוָת, stating that “in light of the second line it is quite possible to interpret this line [v. 28a] as describing the rush of flooding waters.”\(^{676}\) Hakham also begins his explanation by suggesting that יְבוּל is כָּל הָהוֹן שֶׁהוּא בָּלָה, but then states, ‘כָּל הָהוֹן שֶׁהוּא בָּלָה, יְבוּל.’\(^{677}\) This equivocation provokes the question as to whether both of these readings—one which suggests that the possessions of the wicked’s house are carried off, and the other which indicates that a stream of water removes the houses of the wicked—should be equally understood in this context. The

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\(^{671}\) *CAD* B, 298.

\(^{672}\) Pope, *Job*, 153-54.

\(^{673}\) *BDB*, 550; *HALOT*, 541, “the celestial sea, the Deluge.” See Gen 6:17; 7:6–7, 10, 17; 9:11, 15, 28; 10:1, 32; 11:10; Ps 29:10.

\(^{674}\) Pope, *Job*, 153.

\(^{675}\) Hakham, *Job*, 161.

\(^{676}\) Hartley, *Job*, 304, n. 30.

\(^{677}\) Hakham, *Job*, 161.
idea that both readings may be intended is intimated by Seow in his observation that an originally conservative orthography would have facilitated a word play between יְבוּל and yebel.\textsuperscript{678}

What is displayed throughout the commentaries on this verse is that readers are compelled to readjust—that is, retrospectively pattern\textsuperscript{679}—their interpretation of what is communicated in v. 28 based upon ensuing revealed information. Throughout the poetic dialogues of Job, the reader has generally come to expect parallelism in some form or another between the lines of a given verse. This is demonstrated, for example, in v. 27, where both lines have three words, and four of these six words directly parallel each other—“heavens” is parallel to “earth,” while “expose” parallels “rise up.” Verse 28 bares structural and phonetic similarities to v. 27 that might incline the reader to expect the same types of parallelism that are so pronounced in this verse. Not only do both lines of v. 28 have three words as they do in v. 27, but the first words in both v. 27a and v. 28a come from the same root גָּלַה—יָגַלוּ and יִגֶל respectively—and thus, display an unmistakable phonetic similarity. Additionally, all four of the lines of vv. 27-28 end in the third person masculine singular possessive pronoun וֹ, creating identical phonetic values at the end of each line. The harmony between these two verses prompts the reader to expect them to read similarly.

Nevertheless, an issue emerges in v. 28b. The expected parallelism is not immediately discernible, leading readers to reexamine their expectations as well as their perception of previous information. That is, once the expected parallelism is absent in v. 28b, the reader must return to v. 28a and question whether it is properly understood. In this specific case, retrospective patterning provides two tenable readings of v. 28—one which focuses on the removal of the wealth of the wicked, and another which depicts the house of the wicked being destroyed by a flood. Both of

\textsuperscript{678} Seow, Job 1-21, 862. Seow’s observation is not only correct for the putative yebel, but rather all of the words related to the flow of liquid composed of the characters יְבּ-לַ-ג.
\textsuperscript{679} See Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 10-14, for an explanation of "retrospective patterning."
these readings present consequences that coincide with just retribution theology and have been broached throughout the dialogues of Job.

5.2.4 Job: Consequence: Terror and Death of the Wicked—vv. 6-9, 11, 22-26

5.2.4.1 Ephemeral Life of the Wicked—vv. 6-9, 11

The wicked’s conspicuous ambition to take pleasure in ill-gotten gain ultimately affects their life span. Not only are possessions ephemeral, but the ultimate fate of the wicked is their untenable life, which likewise swiftly passes. Even if the wicked reach the apex of financial success in life, this prosperity will not endure the test of time.\(^680\) Even if they increase in earthly power, the temporality of the illicit possessions in their hands will still be analogous to their life span. That is to say—the wicked’s enjoyment of life is as temporal as their ill-gotten gain. The life of the wicked is fleeting—it is taken from them in an instant—with no subsequent consciousness of their existence.

Zophar’s illustration of the wicked’s lack of substantiality\(^681\) opens by portraying the impious bearing a robust appearance, yet consequently chastened, eradicated, and forgotten. If the wicked were presumably to rise up to the heavens, arriving at a height that would situate their heads in the clouds (וֹשֵׁא יָעָשׂ יָעָשׂ רֹאשְׁוֹ וְרֹאשְׁוֹ שִׁירַיָּם [v. 6]), their eminence would still be short-lived (vv. 7-9). As to be expected, the retribution upon the wicked is surely not based upon physical stature. Rather, the loftiness depicted in v. 6 is part of a wider biblical metaphor depicting the proud evildoer.

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\(^{681}\) Wilson, *Job*, 214.

\(^{682}\) The word וֹשֵׁא, which is generally considered to be a *hapax legomenon* (though Clines, *Job*, 474, claims that is also occurs in 15:31 [see chapter 3]), is from the word נָשֵׁא “lift up.” Thus, it should probably be defined as “height, loftiness” (see Ps 89:10) and understood in this context as a figurative term describing pride. Hakham, *Job*, 154.
The imagery of the robust despot notably appears in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, where he is depicted as being extremely proud, striving to rise to the heavens to supplant God and dominate the cosmos (Isa 14:13-14; Ezek 28:2, 5, 17). As a consequence of this tyrant’s contemptuous behavior, he is weakened (Isa 14:10, 16-17; Ezek 28:6-7, 16) and eventually falls at the height of his presumed majesty, humiliated in his demise (Isa 14:15, 19, 20; Ezek 28:8-10). The collapse of this would-be ruler is as abrupt as his self-aggrandizing ascent to eminence. The arrogant ruler is publicly disgraced (Isa 14:16; Ezek 28:17-19) and eventually dies (Isa 14:11, 19; Ezek 28:8-9) as a result of retribution carried out by God (Isa 14:5; Ezek 28:6, 10-12, 16).

The pride of the wicked is implicit in Ps 37:35-38, where the psalmist relates from personal experience a description of the ruthless wicked (רָׁאִיתִי רָׁשָׁע עָׁרִיץ). The psalmist likens the wicked to a tree and claims to have witnessed evildoers grow tall like a luxuriant cedar (וּמִתְעָׁרֶה כְּאֶזְרָׁח רֵעַן). Yet, despite the impressive stature of the wicked, their existence as a dominant figure is but momentary. Those who observed them in their once esteemed position pass by where they once towered, and, in an instant, the ruthless are no more (וְיִעֲבֹר וְהִנֵּה אֵינֶנּוּ). The psalmist relates that even upon personally seeking out the location of the formerly imposing wicked, they are no longer to be found (וְוָאֲבָרֶה וְלֹא נִמְצָּא). It subsequently emerges that the cutting off of the arrogant is carried out by God and coincides with the promotion of the righteous (37:37-38). Thus, the psalmist likewise depicts the once lofty evildoer, swiftly abased as a result of divine retribution.

The swift humbling of the wicked from their makeshift lofty thrones portrayed by the psalmist is seemingly what Zophar recounts in 20:7-8. Zophar carries this out by using imagery

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683 Similarities in imagery are particularly noticeable between the ruler depicted in Isa 14:13-14 and the prideful evildoer in Job 20:6. In Job, the haughty man’s height reaches the heavens (טְפֻסִים) and his head is in the cloud/s (עָב). In Isaiah 14 the ruler strives to ascend to the heavens (טְפֻסִים) and reach beyond the heights of the cloud/s (עָב).

684 See Amos 9:2 and Obad 4 for other examples relating to divine retribution upon those who aspire to ascend to the heavens.

685 Several similar observations are made by Hartley, Job, 304-5.
related to temporary physical and non-physical elements, which quickly come into being and expire without remembrance. The wicked are initially likened to their own excrement, which rapidly commences the process of disintegration upon exiting their bodies and, in the course of time, permanently vanishes (וֹכֶל לָׁנֶצ ח יֹאבֵד [v. 7a]). Those who once envisioned themselves as virtually celestial beings, go from the pinnacle of human glory to the ignobility of dung, and are forever eliminated.686 As related in Psalm 37, those who were accustomed to seeing the wicked will question their whereabouts, further confirming their disappearance. Their disappearance is, ironically, conspicuous,687 permitting everyone to see and understand their true frailty regardless of their initial appearance (לֵצֶא אִמְרוּ [v. 7b]).

Zophar continues with the motif of the quick eradication of the wicked and transitions from the physical to the immaterial realm in his next metaphor (v. 8). The wicked are likened to a dream which flies away and cannot be found (כ חֲלוֹם יָׁעוּף), wandering away as a night vision (כְחֶזְיוֹן לָיְלָה). The depiction of the wicked as a succession of brief images passing through the mind of someone who is sleeping seems to have been a conventional way of portraying one’s enemies.689 Psalm 73:20 depicts God implementing retribution upon the wicked by characterizing them as a dream (כ חֲלוֹם) that is despised by God upon awakening. This once again implies the brevity of the wicked’s existence in the presence of a retributive God. Isaiah similarly likens the armies of the nations that come against Ariel to a dream and a night vision (כ חֲלוֹם חֲזוֹן לַיְלָה [29:7]). Nevertheless, Isaiah depicts God as ultimately bringing about retribution to the ruthless by causing them to vanish (כִי-אָׁפֵס עָׁרִיץ וְכָׁלָה לֵץ [29:20a]), as well as restoring the humble and needy who delight in the Lord (20:19). Thus, the imagery characterizing evildoers as dreams and visions not

686 Wilson, Job, 214.
687 Clines, Job 1-20, 486.
688 Hakham explains in Job, 154, n. 11, that the hofal יֹאבֵד should be understood in light of other passives like נעלם "he disappears"—that is to say, having the form of a passive but functioning essentially as an active.
689 Seow, Job 1-21, 838.
only delineates the belief that they are promptly eliminated, but also, like v. 7, communicates that there is no substantive reality behind their outward pretense.  

The implication behind Zophar stating that the wicked person is sought and not found is that divine retribution results in their death. Zophar further implies this consequence by metaphorically utilizing the verb יָׁעוּף, “to fly” with dream imagery in v 8. This same root (עוף) is used in Hos 9:11 to expound upon divine punishment that was to come upon Ephraim by way of their glory flying away (אספרים כֻּלִּים יִתְעוֹפֵף כְּבוֹדָם). The practical consequences of the flying away of Ephraim’s glory would be their inability to conceive, enjoy pregnancy, and give birth to children. In other words, Ephraim’s disobedience brings about the preclusion of life itself. Just as telling is how עוף is used in Ps 90:10, where it points to the temporality of the human lifespan. According to the psalmist, regardless of how many years we live, every human life quickly passes, and in the end, “we all fly away (נָּׁעֻפָה”).” Zophar too uses the metaphor of flying away to assert that just retribution is ultimately manifested in the swift death of the wicked.

This point becomes even more obvious in v. 9, where Zophar pronounces the complete disappearance of evildoers by way of alluding to Job’s previous comments concerning his own situation. In 7:8, Job laments his impending death by stating that the eye which gazed upon him would no longer see him because he would die. Zophar paraphrases Job’s words in 20:9 and suggests that the disappearance Job referred to only happens to evildoers. Alluding back to v. 7b, Zophar states that it is the eye that looks upon the wicked that will not continue to behold them (שָׁעַר שָׁעַר יִרְאֶה וָלָא תְּזֵית [v. 9a]).

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690 Clines, Job 1-20, 486.
691 BDB, 733; HALOT, 800.
692 The idea of godless people dying early is echoed in Ps 55:24, in which the men of blood and lies are condemned not to live out half of their days (אֶנְשֶׁי דָם וּמִרְמָה לֹא יֶחֱצוּ יְמֵיהֶם).
693 Clines, Job 1-20, 486.
As Job continues to reflect upon his condition in chapter 7, he relates that those who descend into Sheol are never able to return to their homes because their habitation no longer recognizes them (v. 10). Once again, Zophar takes up similar rhetoric to communicate to Job that this scenario indeed comes to pass. Nevertheless, there will be no sign of remembrance of the wicked in their places (ences will not look because their former resid

upon them favorably. The wicked are a passing dream that comes and goes, flying away (v. 8); they are quickly forgotten (v. 9). The wicked eventually suffer the same fate as their illicitly obtained wealth.

Again, the author of Psalm 37 corroborates Zophar’s opinions concerning the fate of the wicked. In accordance with Zophar, the psalmist has faith that justice will eventually prevail, resulting in the evildoer being completely cut off (37:9). Their being cut off is described by the psalmist in terms of their quick disappearance, just as Zophar characterizes the wicked’s fate. Upon their demise, “You will stare upon their (former) place and they are not there. (וְהִתְבוֹנְתָּ עֲלֵי מְקוֹמָם וְאֵינֶנּוּ [v. 10b]).” Zophar and the psalmist agree—sooner rather than later, death will fall upon the impious, depriving them of any postmortem remembrance.

This downfall is assured regardless of the apparent vitality of the evildoers. In particular, if the impious are young, their conduct prematurely brings them down to the grave. Even though the bones of the wicked—their structural support and strength—are filled with youthful vigor,

their vitality cannot be prevented from expiring with them.

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694 There appears to be an oddity in the usage of מַקֵּם as a feminine noun in this line. The word מַקֵּם might be a feminine collective referring to the people of the place or the town. More simply, the feminine verb could be influenced by the preceding clause (עִּנֶנֶה וְלֹא תוֹסִיף). In either case, Sarna’s preformative taqtil form, as proposed for this verse in Sarna, “Mythological Background of Job 18,” 318, is unneeded. See also Clines, Job 1-20, 474.

695 Hakham, Job, 155.

696 See particularly the warning about coveted riches flying away Prov 23:5.

697 Rowley, Job, 143.

698 Hakham, Job, 155.
11]) upon their death. Reward in the system of just retribution is contingent upon right and wrong actions and not upon bodily fortitude.

In 20:6-9 Zophar makes reference to wisdom-related metaphors and adages to indicate that the arrogant wicked meet a swift and fatal end, losing all hope of remembrance. Zophar adds to this assertion in v. 11 by emphasizing that personal characteristics are inconsequential within the paradigm of just retribution. Sinners receive their just due irrespective of their age, strength, and position. For wickedness, the penalty is death. This punishment is couched in much more overt terminology towards the end of Zophar’s speech.

5.2.4.2 Personal Retribution when Refilling—v. 22

Despite the previous descriptive explanations of death awaiting the wicked, Zophar is not quite finished portraying their demise. In fact, Zophar’s final statements on this matter in his second speech are especially unambiguous in pointing out the inescapability of the destruction of the evildoer. Through the usage of more direct and violent imagery, Zophar continues the motif of God carrying out the death penalty upon the wicked.

Zophar previously defended the idea that the wicked can experience plenty for a period of time which comes to an abrupt end as a result of divine retribution (vv. 15, 17, 18, 21). Thus, it is not surprising that, as Zophar comes to the pinnacle of his speech on the punishment of the wicked, he depicts them overtaken by distress during a time of abundance. In

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699 Wilson, Job, 215. Longman contends that v. 11 treats the death of the children of the wicked. However, this seems less likely than the poet mentioning the demise of the wicked for the following two reasons: 1) The reference to the sons is in the plural in v. 10a (בָּנָּיו יְרֵצְוּ דִּים) whereas v. 11 seemingly reverts back to the collective singular (i.e., עִצְמוֹתָו, עִמּוֹ), and 2) The context indicates that, though the wicked are dispossessed of their ill-gotten gain, their own death is the ultimate retribution for their misdeeds and not the death of their children. Longman, Job, 268-69.

700 Clines, Job 1-20, 494.

701 Literally “it will be narrow for him” in the sense of “it will be distressing for him.” See BDB, 864, B, Qal, def. 1, and the accompanying passages there for the verb רָצָה used with ה to mean “to be distressed.”

702 See GKC §74h for an explanation of how certain Qal infinitives are formed on the analogy of מָשַׁר verbs. See Jer 25:12 for the identical orthography and Hakham, Job, 158, n. 29 for an explanation concerning the unusual vowel pointing.
what appears to be an allusion to Job’s personal circumstances (cf., the prosperity reported in 1:1-3), Zophar claims that divine wrath is sent against the wicked as they enjoy their short-lived prosperity (compare the casualties described in 1:13-19).

The manner in which this retribution is depicted in v. 22 is a difficult to decipher. The phrase כָּל-יִדָּהָם עָּמֵל תְּבֹאֶנּוּ can be literally translated, “The hand of every worker will come upon him,” but what that exactly means is unclear. Some commentators recommend reading with the Old Greek (ἀνάγκη) and the Latin (dolor) and suggest a slight emendation to נָעַשׁ “trouble,” instead of the MT’s עָּמֵל “laborer, sufferer.” Besides the evidence of the versions, Clines summarizes why he and many other commentators read נָעַשׁ in stating, “it is hard to believe in a depiction of the wicked man being brought to ruin at the hands of those he has defrauded.” Nevertheless, it is unclear what exactly commentators believe precludes Zophar from claiming that retribution upon the wicked could not come from the righteous themselves in the model of just retribution. Hartley notes this possibility and states that Zophar suggests that, “the very ones whom the evildoer[s have] wronged will turn against their oppressor[s] in anger.”

The key to grasping the significance of how and why עָּמֵל is used in 20:22 stems from understanding Job’s usage of this word in 3:20. As Job curses the day of his birth, he presumably speaks of himself in questioning why God would give light (i.e., life) to the sufferer (עָּמֵל). Thus, עָּמֵל in this context distinctly indicates someone in misery who is undergoing trials. The meaning is substantiated by noting that נָעַשׁ is in parallel to מָרֵי נָפֶשׁ “the bitter of spirit.” Those who are

703 Hakham, Job, 159; Wilson, Job, 217.
704 Seow, Job 1-21, 844.
705 See the definitions in BDB, 765-66. Those who support this emendation are Rowley, Job, 145; Habel, Job, 312; Clines, Job 1-20, 477; Seow, Job 1-21, 857. Several accept this reading and yet do not explicitly note the emendation. See Pope, Job, 152-53; Wilson, Job, 217-18; Longman, Job, 265. Many of the modern versions follow. See e.g., NRSV, NIV, NAB (Revised), RSV.
706 Clines, Job 1-20, 477.
“bitter of spirit” in the Bible are those who are in deep distress (i.e., Prov 31:6; Ezek 27:31; Isa 38:15; 1 Sam 1:10; 22:2), which is how Job uses this phrase concerning his personal situation in 7:11 and 10:1. Nevertheless, the phrase שְׁפִּי נָפֶּשׁ can also depict those who have become so unnerved that they are capable of violence (Judg 18:25; 2 Sam 17:8). In light of the fact that the phrase שְׁפִּי נָפֶּשׁ can portray those willing to participate in acts of violence, perhaps Zophar implements Job’s previous rhetoric and alludes to Job’s previous parallel in order to portray those whose hands bring calamity upon the wicked after having been mistreated.

Contextually, there appears to be some support for this interpretation. Zophar reveals in v. 19 that the wicked take advantage of the poor and steal their property. The wicked are insatiable, Zophar continues, craving everything in their path. Nevertheless, even if the wicked were able to eat all that their rapacious appetites desire, their illicit prosperity would not endure the test of time (vv. 20-21). While the wicked are in the act of enjoying their would-be prosperity, they are overtaken by the consequences of their actions. The hand of every sufferer, every person they oppressed as depicted in v. 19, comes upon them, causing them to reap what they have sown from those whom they have exploited.

5.2.4.3 Heavenly Retribution while Refilling—v. 23

Although v. 22 focuses on the calamity that meets the wicked through the hand of those whom they have mistreated, retributive justice ultimately comes from God. Accordingly, in v. 23 Zophar proceeds to describe the calamity that falls upon the wicked from the heavens. Paralleling v. 22a, Zophar commences v. 23 by alluding to swallowing imagery again. Through

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708 See also Job 21:25, where Job refers to the person who lived a troubled life as dying with a “bitter soul” (ברכה שְׁפִּי נָפֶּשׁ).
709 Hakham, Job, 159. This reading understands the singular שְׁפִּי to be a collective. Hakham suggests that all of these sufferers cast their hand out against the wicked and plunder their possessions. This idea also coincides with the retributive theology advocated by Zophar up to this juncture of the chapter.
710 Ibid.
this imagery, Zophar guarantees retributive consequences upon the wicked if they fill their bellies with the ill-gotten gain of those whom they have oppressed ( كلملا بحسن). Now, unlike v. 22, Zophar explicitly testifies to God being directly involved in bringing supernatural consequences upon the iniquitous. If the wicked continue in their gluttonous ways, God will become fiercely angry and send the divine wrath upon them (יְש ל ח-בֹחֲרוֹן א פוֹ).

God’s fierce anger is manifested through God eschewing abstract retribution principles and specifically targeting evildoers (vv. 23c-25). God’s specific focus on the wicked in this section is initially revealed by God raining judgment down upon them—that is, upon the flesh of the wicked (קלוֹחַ עָלֵימוֹ). In this phrase, Zophar portrays God as utterly indignant and executing an individual act of physical retribution upon the wicked. This is the first of two punitive afflictions pointedly carried out by God upon the wicked in vv. 23-25.

Nevertheless, the exact act of retribution against the wicked in v. 23 is unclear. The two major issues in interpretation concern making sense of עלימו in its context, and the meaning of the difficult phrase בִּלְחוּמ. Initially, the third person masculine singular possessive pronoun of עלימו seems to suggest that עלימו assumes its less familiar masculine singular meaning. If בִּלְחוּמ is to be understood as recorded in the MT, the corresponding lexical form קלח only appears in Zeph 1:17 (spelled defectively), where the context suggests that the word relates to the human body.

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711 Clines—appealing to Driver—contends that יְי, which can only mean “may it be.” Therefore, the poet must be indicating a wish expressing that the following actions would happen to the ungodly. Clines, Job 1-20, 477. This is certainly a reasonable suggestion which maintains the retribution theme. However, the jussive can also be understood in a conditional or potential sense (GKC §109h-i). This suggests that the phrase can also express a provisional action—that is to say, “If, upon filling his belly...”—and does not necessarily have to express a wish.

712 Though no term for God is employed in this verse, Clines rightly notes that, “God is so evidently the promoter of the moral order that he does not need to be mentioned by name: ‘he’ sends his burning anger against the wrongdoer.” Ibid., 494.

713 The context suggests that Zophar is speaking in the indicative; thus, it is likely that the jussive form here is without its ordinary corresponding sense. GKC §109k. Additionally, this verb connotes God’s punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah (זָעֲרָֽדוּ ו לְמִטִּיר ע ל-סְדֹם וְע ל-עֲמֹרָּה גָּׁפְרִית וָׁאֵש [Gen 19:24]) and the plagues in Egypt (הִנְנִי מ מְטִיר כָּעֵת מָׁחָׁר בָּרָׁד כָּבֵד מְאֹד אֲשֶֽׁר לֹא-הָֽיָּה כָּמֹהוּ בְמִצְר יִם [Ex 9:18; cf. 9:23]). See further explanation below.

714 See Job 22:2 and 27:23. GKC §103f, n. 3.
Thus, many of the English translations render the word “flesh” (NRSV, RSV, KJV, NASB)\(^{716}\) perhaps taking a clue from the Old Greek’s rendering of σάρξ. In Zephaniah, God individually enacts divine retribution upon those who have sinned against the Lord (וּלְחֻמָּם כְּגָלָלִים וְשֻפְךְ דָּם כֶעָפָר). The peoples’ blood will be spilled out like dirt and their “flesh” will be scattered as if it were dung (וֹמַבִּלְחָם וֹמַבִּלְחָם).\(^{717}\) Given the context, in addition to the related words in Arabic لحم and Aramaic ל›ח›ם, which can also assume the meaning “flesh,” it is quite reasonable to understand ל›ח›ם as signifying “flesh” in Zeph 1:17.

However, the passage in Job has been more challenging for interpreters. This is readily noted by the diversity in the modern translations. Whereas the NJB gives a similar rendering to the Zephaniah passage “flesh”, the KJV translates this phrase, “while he is eating.” This translation evidently comes from reading וֹמַבִּלְחָם from ל›ח›ם II “to eat.”\(^{719}\) The NRSV translates the substantival derivative of ל›ח›ם II and renders the phrase “as their food,” ostensibly reading וֹמַבִּלְחָם or ל›ח›ם.\(^{720}\) Based on this translation, Zophar depicts God as raining down “his food,” causing the wicked to overeat. This divine “force feeding”\(^{722}\) could be one reason that Zophar insists that the wicked eventually vomit their illicit gain.

Other interpreters have concluded that ל›ח›ם stems from ל›ח›ם I, “to fight, to do battle,” or a derivative noun pertaining to “warfare.”\(^{723}\) For example, Hakham understands ל›ח›ם to be a collective referring to God’s implements of war against the wicked which he identifies as fire,

\(^{716}\) The NAB (Revised) “bowels” and the NIV “entrails” dissent.  
\(^{717}\) The word “scattered” is supplied based upon the gapping of the verb ש›עי in the previous line.  
\(^{718}\) Jastrow, 704.  
\(^{719}\) BDB, 536.  
\(^{720}\) Understanding the third person masculine singular possessive suffix (ו) collectively.  
\(^{721}\) For those who follow this reading see Driver and Gray, Job, 1:180; 2:141; Habel, Job, 312; Clines, Job 1-20, 477-78.  
\(^{722}\) Clines, Job 1-20, 494; Seow, Job 1-21, 844.  
\(^{723}\) BDB, 535. Seow reads based on ל›ח›ם I and suggests that ل›ح›م is related to the Arabic cognate لحم "hand-to hand-fighting, brawl." Seow, Job 1-21, 858; Choon Leong Seow, “Orthography, Textual Criticism, and the Poetry of Job,” JBL 130 (2011): 81-82.
Thus, the sense of this line according to Hakham is, “God will rain upon him (the wicked) with his (God’s) instruments of war.” Hartley agrees that it is best to discern בִּלְחוּמ as derived from לחם I, and understands the phrase to depict God raining down “munitions” upon the wicked. These readings are seemingly coherent with the context, which lends itself to violent punishment coming from the heavens. Moreover, the Vulgate’s rendering of בָּלַחְוָמ as bellum suum “his war” provides evidence that this understanding is not a contemporary novelty.

Thus, the multivalence of לחם, and the ability of v. 23c to accommodate its different meanings, leads to legitimate diversity of opinion concerning the calamity Zophar portrays. Nevertheless, the question remains: if לחם can be interpreted as “flesh” in the Zephaniah passage focusing upon divine retribution, what prevents this from being the preferred reading in Job 20:23, notwithstanding the other sensible interpretations? It seems that a major issue for commentators is not simply the variety of meanings the word לחם can assume, but also the apparent redundancy (if בָּלַחְוָמ were rendered “in his flesh”) of the third person masculine singular suffixes of בָּלַחְוָמ and שֵלַחָם. It is perplexing to commentators as to what exactly Zophar would suggest in stating that “(God) will rain down, upon him—against his flesh,” because of the obvious tautology. Thus, Clines states that the phrase בָּלַחְוָמ, “should probably be rendered ‘on, against his flesh,” but

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724 Hakham, Job, 159.
725 Hartley, Job, 303, n. 20. Here Hartley provides a brief summary and explanation of the multivalence of the root לחם. Seow, Job, 857-58, provides a more comprehensive explanation and considers the history of interpretation.
726 See Ball, Job, 287, referencing the Vulgate, “And he rains down upon him his battle (or the weapons of his battle).” Italics his. Pope—following Dahood—posita reading wēyamṯer ʿālāw mabbēl ḥammō for אִנִּיהָשׁ לֶלַחְוָמ. This suggestion is precarious for several reasons. Initially, there is no textual evidence for this specific change. Secondarily, if emendation were necessary to restore the line, one would not have to alter the consonantal Hebrew text so drastically to make sense of the line. See the examples of the slight emendations mentioned above. Also it is problematic that Pope posits a hapax legomenon to resolve the interpretive issue. The word mabbēl is indeed creative and suitable for the context, yet nevertheless, it is a hapax legomenon in a passage that can be understood without it.
continues “(i)t seems strange however, to have ‘upon him’ (עלימו) as well as ‘against his flesh…””

It is important to note that repetition of this nature should not pose overwhelming problems in interpretation, as this is not the only case of tautology in Job. For instance, in Job’s next speech he literally states, “Their seed is established before them with them” (וְרָֽעָם נָּכוֹן לִפְנֵיהֶם עִמָּם [21:8]). Toward the end of Job’s speech he confronts his friends’ potential response to his claims by using three different words to indicate a dwelling place stating, “You will say, ‘Where is the house of the noble? Where is his tent? Where are the dwelling places of the wicked?’” (וּכִי תֹאמְר אָֽלָּה בֵית אָֽלָּה מִשְכְנוֹת רְשָׁעִים [21:28]). These are certainly intelligible sentences in spite of their redundancies.

Additionally, observing Zophar’s repetition in v. 23c, in light of the punishment Zophar portrays against the wicked, suggests that the tautology should be rendered emphatically. This emphatic interpretation is based on the correspondence between Zophar depicting God as raining down judgment (י מְטֵר) and Pentateuchal language with regard to divine blessings and punishments. In Exod 16:4 God says through Moses, “I am going to rain (מְטִיר) to you bread from the heavens (לֶחֶם).” Nevertheless, this same benevolent God who rained down bread to the people of Israel also threatens to rain down (משר in the hiphil) judgment in the forms of sulfur, fire, and hail (Gen 19:24; Exod 9:18, 23). In later tradition, God is depicted as punishing by raining down sulfur and fire once again (Ezek 38:22). Perhaps, however, most closely related to this passage in Job is Ps

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727 Clines, Job 1-20, 477.
728 See chapter 6 for more extensive treatment of this passage and its relation to Job’s view of retributive justice.
729 See also the emphatic tautology in Gen 26:28, “Let there be an oath between us—between us and between you—and let us make a covenant with you” (וְנֹּאמֶר תְהִי נָּא אָלָּה בֵינוֹתֵינוּ בֵיןֵינוּ וּבֵיןֶךָ וְנִכְרְתָׁה בְרִית עִמָּךְ).
730 This blessing is remembered in Ps 78:24 by the psalmist, stating that “He (God) rained down (וְיִמְטֵר) unto them manna to eat.”
11:6, where the psalmist uses מְטֵר in the jussive *hiphil* form (יָמְטֵר) as in Job 20:23 and relates, in poetry, that God will rain down traps, fire, and sulfur against the wicked.

In light of how מְטֵר is used in the *hiphil* to depict divine retribution throughout the Bible, it is reasonable to suggest that the simple mention of יָמְטֵר, in a discourse relating to divine wrath (חֲרוֹן), is sufficient to evoke biblical imagery pertaining to God raining down punishment upon the wicked. Zophar uses a multivalent word to contend that God, in divine fury, does not rain down bread (לֶחֶם). Rather, God rains down his instruments of divine wrath (fire, sulfur, and hail) against the flesh (בִלְחוּמ) of the wicked. 731 The repetition of the recipient of the punishment is for emphasis. God will indeed rain down upon him.

5.2.4.4 **Pierced by the Divine—vv. 24-25**

In v. 23 Zophar depicts the first of two violent retributive acts against the wicked in God raining instruments of war against their flesh. In vv. 24-25, Zophar proceeds to depict the second of these unavoidable punishments. The wicked try to flee from their punishment, but they are inevitably seized in their attempted escape (vv. 24-25b). Knowing that retribution is forthcoming, they live life perpetually fearful of the expected repercussions (v. 25c).

The wicked’s efforts to avoid divine chastening are to no avail as God will personally rise up against them. As Zophar continues his discourse, he exchanges the imagery of the heavenly artillery implied through the mentioning of יָמְטֵר in the previous line for tangible physical weapons that humans use against each other in battle in v. 24. In doing this, he advances the personification of God as the one who takes note of wickedness, is deeply angered, and enacts divine retribution upon individuals. God is now depicted as a combatant in warfare, as well as a heavenly bowman, who endeavors to cut down the impious with weapons of war.

731 Ibn Ezra likewise understood בִלְחוּמ to refer to the “flesh” and was evidently not bothered by the tautology. Gómez Aranda, *Libro de Job*, 155-56, n. 6.
Seeing retribution on its way, the wicked strive to flee the castigation which comes through God’s weapon against them (נשק ברזל). The exact nature of the נשק ברזל utilized by God to pursue the wicked is uncertain. Nevertheless, a clue to understanding what is depicted in the phrase נשק ברזל might be present in the image of the wicked fleeing (ברח). When the word רח is used in the Bible with a person as the subject, it generally depicts a person/people fleeing the presence of another person/other people, predominantly because of danger or hostility. Furthermore, flight in the face of a potentially dangerous situation is implicitly expressed through the use of רח in other parts of the Bible. This is usually understood by way of the apparent reason for the flight, from whom the person is fleeing, and/or the location from whence the subject flees. In light of this, by Zophar stating that the wicked would try to flee (ברח) from God’s iron weapon, he portrays the wicked fleeing in the face of physical danger opposite an opponent who would do them harm were they to remain stationary. Thus, Zophar depicts God within a distance close enough to be able to physically harm the wicked with the iron instrument. God is the assailant who searches out the wicked, going to physical war against them with a type of iron weapon that would be used in close combat.

On the occasion that a would-be fugitive in the Bible were to flee from God, he would inevitably be caught. This is what v. 24b depicts as God is implicitly portrayed as an archer taking aim from a further distance than the divine assault of v. 24a. God’s accuracy is impeccable; he needs to take only one shot in order to pierce the wicked through with a bronze arrow (חלף)

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732 See GCK §159b-c for the imperfect being used to express conditionality as in this verse.
734 Gen 31:2, 27; Exod 14:5; 1 Sam 19:12, 18; 22:17; 27:4; 2 Sam 15:13-38; 1 Kgs 2:39; 11:17, 40; Isa 22:3; Jer 4:29; 52:7; Neh 6:11.
735 The idea that the נשק ברזל is an instrument used for close-range battle—perhaps a sword—is also proposed by Hakham, Job, 159, and, Hartley, Job, 307.
736 Jonah 1:3, 10; 4:2; Ps 139:7.
737 Reading חלף as it is used in the Judg 5:26 where Jael pierces through Sisera’s temple (חלף).
In a satirical allusion to Job’s earlier portrayal of God acting as an archer (6:4; 16:13), Zophar now directly tells Job that God only enacts this type of personal retribution upon the evil doers. If Job claims that this is his punishment, Zophar makes the counterclaim that the retributive equilibrium necessarily means that he is wicked.

Perhaps the most significant piece of information Zophar communicates in this verse lies in the implied merism represented through the distances in which God enacts retribution. In v. 24a God punished the wicked at close range; he is portrayed as a combatant, possessing a sort of bronze weapon that terrifies the wicked and causes them to flee God’s immediate presence. In v. 24b, retribution is apparently carried out from afar, as God is depicted as a marksman firing arrows and piercing through the wicked. Wilson summarizes the imagery presented in v. 24: “Like a soldier fleeing before a warrior with an iron weapon, the wicked, seeking to avoid the consequences of his evil, may run directly into the path of the bronze-tipped arrow of divine judgement.” The judgment of God coming from near and far testifies to the inevitability and unavoidability of retribution.

The unavoidability of divine retribution is a familiar motif evident elsewhere in the Bible. Isaiah portrays God destroying the land and bringing judgment upon the unfaithful. In this prophecy he asserts the inability of any human to escape the coming wrath by proclaiming that those who try to flee the sound of terror will fall into a pit and those who are able to climb out of

738 This reading understands קֶשֶת to be a synecdoche for “arrow” as it is likely used in Isa 13:18 (רִים נְעָׁוִיה וּקְשָׁתוֹת הַטֹּרְפֶּה). See also Habel, Job, 319; Clines, Job 1-20, 495; Seow, Job 1-21, 859.
740 Irony emerges when reading 20:24 in conjunction with Ps 73:14-15, where wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to take advantage of the poor, the needy, and the upright. The psalmist concludes that just retribution comes against the wicked through their own swords piercing their hearts, and their bow being broken. This imagery is escalated in Zophar’s speech to depict retribution against those who take advantage of the poor and needy. According to Zophar, God draws the divine sword and assaults the wicked. It is God’s bow and arrow that pierces the wicked through. The idea that God causes the consequences of the wicked to resemble the wicked’s former abusive behavior is also suggested by Bildad in 18:7-10. See discussion in section 4.2.
741 Wilson, Job, 220.
742 Pope, Job, 153; Hakham, Job, 159; Hartley, Job, 307; Clines, Job 1-20, 495; Seow, Job 1-21, 844.
a pit will then become entangled in a snare (24:18). Isaiah contends that it is impossible to avert due punishment and divine justice because, if the wicked were to escape one disaster, then another of equal or more serious gravity would fall upon them. Amos agrees that “there is no escape from the weapons of divine justice.” If, on the day of the Lord, one were to run from a lion, one would encounter a bear. If one were to somehow escape from the presence of the bear and run into a house, one would be bitten by a snake as soon as one set one’s hand upon a wall (5:19). Seow appropriately summarizes, “there is no escaping divine hostility; death is inevitable in the face of it.”

But as they approach their impending death, Zophar depicts the wicked as severely impaired. As a clear development of the scene portrayed in v. 24, in one word (she'elah), God is tersely portrayed as drawing an arrow from a quiver. Then suddenly the would-be escapee is

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743 Pope, Job, 153.
745 Cf. also Amos 9:1-4, which also portrays the inevitability of doom.
746 Seow, Job 1-21, 844.
747 The verb she'elah has been difficult for commentators which has resulted in suggestions for emendation. Some commentators adopt a reading coinciding with the OG based upon its rendering of βέλος “arrow.” Dhorme, Rowley, and Pope accept an emendation to himash and render the word “shaft.” Dhorme, Job, 303; Pope, Job, 153; Rowley, Job, 145. Seow disagrees that the OG is even reading himash but, rather, suggests that it understands himash as the noun *shelef “shaft.” Seow, Job 1-21, 859. Clines accepts the MT’s rendering of himash and supplies the unstated direct object “it,” referring back to an arrow shot in v. 24 and the victim withdrawing it from their wound. Clines, Job 1-20, 478. Nevertheless, as noted by Hartley, “it is possible to that the Hebrew himash refers to the entire action, from the shooting of an arrow up to its piercing target.” Hartley, Job, 303, n. 23. Hakham references Ps 129:6 and notes that himash is used intransitively in that context indicating, perhaps, a passive action. Therefore, Hakham suggests that the simple mention of the word himash indicates that the weapon that is implied in v. 24b to pierce the wicked is pulled out of its holster. Hakham states, “המסת את הזרע, שלח מתריקו.” This reading fits this context as it appears that Zophar pithily describes the alacrity of the retribution brought upon the wicked as soon as God determines to enact punishment. Hakham, Job, 159.
pierced by God’s glistening arrow, which penetrates his body, proceeds into the gall, and hangs out of his back (וֹמִּרְרָׁת וּבָֽרָֽק וִיָּצֵא.)

Though there is no explicit mention of God shooting the arrow, the firing of the weapon is implied through the word שָׁלַּף, just as the mentioning of מְטֵר in the previous verse intimates retribution through heavenly weapons. Zophar does not mention all of the details of the retribution portrayed in v. 24 but, rather, concisely relates what happens at the beginning and the end of the retributive incident. The brevity in which Zophar recites this judgment (i.e., the weapon is drawn and immediately sticks out of the back of the wicked) is telling of how efficient God is in exacting retribution, as well as the fleeting nature of the lives of the wicked. The wicked are cognizant of this, according to Zophar, who echoes the now banal statement of Eliphaz in 15:21-24. An awareness of their punishment drives them not to repentance, but to constant trepidation. Wherever evildoers go, terrors are upon them.

748 The term מְטֵר chiefly means “lightning,” but can also refer to the flash of a shiny weapon (Nah 3:3; Hab 3:11; Ezek 21:15, 20, 33). Particularly important, however, are Zech 9:14 and Ps 144:6. In Zech 9:14 we encounter the arrow of the Lord going forth (shining like) lightning (וָיְהוָּה עֲלֵיהֶם יֵרָ֖אֶה וְיָֽצָּא כָּבָֽרָֽק חִצוֹ֥ה), while in Ps 144:6 the psalmist requests that God send lightning and shoot arrows in a clear parallelism. See Pope, Job, 153; Clines, Job 1-20, 478; Seow, Job 1-21, 860. Thus in v. 25 the term מְטֵר seems to refer to the shiny part of the arrow that was presumably shot in v. 24 and is now protruding from the body of the fugitive.

749 There has been some discussion concerning the word מִגֵּוָׁה because this is the only time this particular spelling is encountered in the Bible—appearing only as גֵּו (Isa 38:17; 50:6; 51:23; Prov 10:13; 19:29; 26:3), as well as the less common (putative) גֵּו (1 Kgs 14:9; Ezek 23:35; Neh 9:26). Dhorme states that since מִגֵּו is absent in the Bible, מִגֵּו is “indisputably preferable.” Dhorme, Job, 304. See also Ball, Job, 287; Habel, Job, 312; Clines, Job 1-20, 478. Hartley posits reading מִגְּגֵוֹוֹה because this noun does not appear in the feminine elsewhere in the Bible. Hartley suggests that the current text could have arisen out of a mistaken writing of the word מִגֵּו (Perhaps alternately מֵגֵו [See BDB, 145]) “pride.” Hartley, Job, 303, n. 24. Yet, the מִגֵּו does not necessarily need to be of concern as it is found elsewhere with other words in Job that are intended to perhaps portray a foreign/exotic feel. See for example the words מִגְּגַּה in 6:10 (normally מֵגַּה in Biblical Hebrew) and מִגַּה in 3:5 (usually spelled מִגְּה). See Greenstein, “Language of Job,” 651-66; Seow, Job 1-21, 24, 859-60. Ultimately, regardless of the phonetic configuration of מִגְּה, it is widely understood to mean “his back.”

750 The verb יִצָּא is gapped between lines a-b of v. 25 and should be understood as also applying to מְטֵר. Seow, Job 1-21, 860.

751 Hakham, Job, 159.

752 See section 3.1.

753 This reading understands the verb יֵצֵא to be conjugated in accordance with the third person masculine singular collective reference to the wicked as is consistent throughout the chapter. See Hakham, Job, 160. In addition, the verb is used conditionally (GCK §159b-c) so as to indicate that wherever the wicked go, they encounter terror.
5.2.5 The Wicked’s Portion: זֶה חֵלֶק -אָׁדָׁם רָׁשָׁע—v. 29

In Job 20 Zophar depicts the cycle of the wicked obtaining ill-gotten gain by means of exploitation of the powerless and striving to maintain possession of their illicit goods. Yet, by way of the imagery of regurgitation, Zophar asserts that evildoers are inevitably forced to surrender control of their goods. In addition to relinquishing their illegitimate goods, the wicked who perpetuate their misdeeds find themselves in a precarious situation. The wicked come under God’s surveillance, and he, in due time, takes individual vengeance upon them, bringing about their death. God’s justice does not permit evildoers to maintain their possessions any more than it permits them to maintain their lives.

5.3 Zophar’s Imagery in the World of the Ancient Near East

As demonstrated above, the imagery utilized by Zophar in chapter 20 to depict the punishment of the wicked is prominent throughout portions of the Bible which relate to divine retribution. Additionally, this imagery transcends the biblical material and is prevalent in other ancient Near Eastern compositions, particularly the Instructions of Amenemope.754 The similarities between this ancient Egyptian composition and Proverbs, particularly Proverbs 22:17-24:22, have been well-noted for many years.755 However, what has not been widely observed is that Amenemope contains literary motifs and portrays imagery shared with Job.


More specifically, *Amenemope* corresponds to Job in its admonitions against abusing the weak for material gain as well as the ephemerality of unlawful possessions. Additionally, *Amenemope*, like Job, illustrates the fate of the wicked, who perpetually desire to obtain ill-gotten gain by exploitation of the weak. Swallowing imagery is also shared between the two compositions to depict the inability of the wicked to retain their illicit gain. As Zophar’s imagery is examined in light of *Amenemope* and excerpts from other ancient Near Eastern literature, it becomes evident how the poet of Job masterfully uses corresponding imagery to communicate analogous theological objectives, as well as emphasize Zophar’s unique goal of portraying God’s intimate involvement in divine retribution.

5.3.1 Cautions against Exploiting the Disadvantaged

In *Amenemope* poverty is not necessarily considered misfortune and is preferable to obtaining ill-gotten gain. In fact, the ideal person, according to the composition, is humble and content with a meager amount of material goods. Therefore, the renouncing of illegitimate gain and deception is a theme that pervades the work. In the case of immoral behavior, conventional wisdom applies with regard to consequences. For example:

*The boat of the greedy is left <in> the mud,*
*While the bark of the silent sails with the wind... 10.10-11*

*Guard your tongue from harmful speech,*
*Then you will be loved by others.*
*You will find your place in the house of god,*
*You will share in the offerings of your lord. 10.21-11.3*\(^758\)

\(^756\) See especially 9.5-8, 16.11-14, and 26.8-14. According to Miriam Lichtheim, there are two basic themes within the composition: 1) “the depiction of the ideal man, the ‘silent man’ and his adversary, the ‘heated man,’ and 2) an ‘exhortation to honesty and warnings against dishonesty.’” Lichtheim, *AEL*, 2:146-47.

\(^757\) See for example, “God hates the falsifier of words, he greatly abhors the dissembler.” 10.11-12. Ibid., 2.154.

\(^758\) Ibid., 2:153.
A most explicit statement is found in 17.5:

_Do good and you will prosper._

Thus, _Amenemope_ shares the paradigm of remuneration that Job’s friends exhort throughout their speeches. Bildad (8:8-10), Eliphaz (15:10, 18–19), and Zophar (20:4–5) base the foundation of their claims pertaining to retribution upon ancient tradition, which asserts that wisdom is old and consequently impeccable. Though _Amenemope_ does not decidedly rely upon ancient tradition per se, the vestiges of reward in accordance with traditional wisdom which appear in the aforementioned lines are key to understanding the approach to the behavioral guidance outlined in the composition.

Straightway in _Amenemope_ there is an exhortation to refrain from brazenness toward the vulnerable:

_Beware of robbing a wretch,
Of attacking a cripple;
Don’t stretch out your hand to touch an old man,
Nor ‘open your mouth’ to an elder. (2.4-7)_

The same concern for the weak and needy that is present in Job 20:10, 19 is displayed in these lines. Chapter 6 of _Amenemope_ similarly calls for respecting the defenseless:

_Do not move the markers on the border of the fields,
Nor shift the position of the measuring-cord.
Do not be greedy for a cubit of land,
Nor encroach on the boundaries of the widow. (7.11-15)_

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759 Ibid., 2:156. Antonio Loprieno and Harold Washington suggest that the belief in a connection between properly behaving and earthly success begins waning towards the end of the Ramesside era in which _Amenemope_ was composed. See Antonio Loprieno, "Theodicy in Ancient Egyptian Texts," in _Theodicy in the World of the Bible_ (eds. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor; Boston: Brill, 2003), 53, as well as, Washington, _Wealth and Poverty_, 101. Whereas the concept of divine retribution may not be as prevalent in _Amenemope_ as it is in some biblical literature, the aforementioned quotations demonstrate that there are remnants of this paradigm in _Amenemope_.

760 _Amenemope_ teaches that profit is obtained when one is not striving to seize control of possessions. For example, see: “Do not grasp and you’ll find profit” (6.15), as well as “Do not strain to seek increase, what you have let it suffice you” (9.14-15). Working honestly is the way one should obtain goods: “Plow your fields and you’ll find what you need, you’ll receive bread from your threshing-floor” (8.17-18). The humble are to be content with what they have without perpetually striving for possessions: “Do not rejoice in wealth from theft, nor complain of being poor” (10.6-7). Lichtheim, _AEL_, 2:151-53.

761 Ibid., 2:151.
Comparable admonitions exist in Akkadian wisdom compositions found at Ugarit. Šimâ Milka more overtly incorporates an aspect of traditional wisdom, and bears similar instructions to those that are found in Amenemope and Job. In this composition a father commands his son to reject exploitation:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
mārī itti ša iṭeŠûnū-finna šēna ē tamulu \\
luppun ētūli itti šībūtī ē tēpuša
\end{array}
\]

My son do not plunder from those who grind flour (for food rations).
Impoverish neither young nor old.
Lines 57-58

Ugaritic version I of the Ballad of Early Rulers further instructs against taking advantage of the needy stating:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
šētūt enšî mamma la ileqqe \\
mār ḫummura mār lāsimā iba’a \\
mār šari ana mār lapni qāssu itarras
\end{array}
\]

One should not treat the weak contemptuously,
The cripple may overtake the runner,
The rich may beg the poor.
Lines 33’, 35’, 37’

Another example of this concern for the less fortunate in the ancient Near East is apparent in Kirta. Toward the end of the composition, after Kirta has been in declining health, his eldest son, not knowing that he has been healed, attempts to usurp his throne. In stating the reasons that Kirta should abdicate the throne, his son blames him of the following misconduct:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
ltn / dn / almnt .
\end{array}
\]

You don’t pursue the widow’s case.
You don’t take up the wretched’s claim.
You don’t expel the poor’s oppressor.
You don’t feed the orphan who faces you,
Nor the widow who stands at your back.
Column VI, Lines 45-50

Though these claims against Kirta prove false, and he subsequently curses his son, it is evident that oppression of society’s less fortunate is depicted as a breach of civility that is indeed worthy of reproof.

According to Amenemope, there are indeed consequences for one who commits evil by exploiting the weak. Such a person is carried off in a flood similar to the flowing waters that carry off the wicked and their possessions in Job 20:28.

He who does evil, the shore rejects him,
Its floodwater carries him away. (4.12-13)

The person who commits this type of iniquity is characterized as an “oppressor of the weak.”

Recognize him who does this on earth;
He is an oppressor of the weak... (8.1-2)

This again echoes Zophar’s statement to Job regarding the wicked in 20:19 who oppress and abandon the poor. The sufferer in the Theodicy similarly observes the immoral who take advantage of the weak, and persecute the powerless by depriving them of their vital resources:

They also humiliate the pitiable man who does no harm.
They empty the grain-bin, the food of a weak man,
They destroy the helpless and trample upon the powerless.

Lines 268, 272, 274

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768 This is one of the two potential interpretations of this verse. See section 5.2.3.2.3.
769 Lichtheim, AEL, 2:150.
770 Ibid., 2.151.
771 Oshima, Babylonian Theodicy, 16, 25.
In light of these excerpts, it is apparent that Zophar’s theology has affinities not only with the biblical material, which prohibits the exploitation of the weak, but also with ancient Near Eastern literature. The ancient Near Eastern literature proves to be quite diverse, having been written in a variety of languages in different locations. Thus, ignoring or impoverishing the poor is a problematic issue, not only for the writers of the biblical text but also for other ancient Near Eastern cultures.

Nevertheless, further comparison between Zophar’s speech and comparable ancient Near Eastern literature reveals that it is more than simply literary or theological motifs that are shared. These compositions also use similar imagery to communicate their respective theological objectives. This is notably the case between Zophar and Amenemope in terms of how they both use imagery of swallowing to relate the inability of illicit gain to remain in the possession of the wicked.

5.3.2 The Temporality of Illicit Possessions

Like Zophar in Job 20:10, Amenemope upholds the claim that the unethical deeds of the immoral financially affect the next generation. In agreement with Zophar, neither the exploiter nor his children will be able to maintain their ill-gotten possessions:

*His wealth will be seized from his children’s hands,*  
*His possessions will be given to another.* (8.7-8)\(^{772}\)

Corresponding to this warning, chapter 7 provides Amenemope’s most extensive exhortation not to set one’s heart upon obtaining wealth. Those who dishonestly obtain physical possessions will surely lose them:

*If riches come to you by theft,*  
*They will not stay the night with you.*  
*Comes day they are not in your house,*

\(^{772}\) Lichtheim, *AEL*, 2:152.
Their place is seen but they’re not there;
Earth opened its mouth, leveled them, swallowed them,
And made them sink into dat.\textsuperscript{773}
They made a hole as big as their size,
And sank into the netherworld;
They made themselves wings like geese,
And flew away to the sky. (9.16-10.5)\textsuperscript{774}

The thematic correspondence between this section and Job 20:18, 21, where Zophar claims that the wicked will not ultimately prosper, is conspicuous. However, Zophar’s related claim regarding the wicked having to return their possessions corresponds to \textit{Amenemope} at the level of imagery related to swallowing.

5.3.3 Imagery of Swallowing in \textit{Amenemope}

The most noticeable correlation between \textit{Amenemope} and Zophar’s speech in Job 20 at the level of imagery appears in \textit{Amenemope}, chapter 11. This chapter begins with a simple admonition to stay away from the property of a poor person:

\begin{quote}
Do not covet a poor man’s goods,
Nor hunger for his bread. (14.5-6)\textsuperscript{775}
\end{quote}

It is clear that the poor man’s goods in the first line of this statement correspond to the poor man’s bread in the second line. The poor man’s goods, which are metaphorically referred to as food, are assumed to be the subject throughout the rest of the chapter. The wicked man cannot “swallow” the poor man’s goods—that is, keep them in his possession—because obtaining this type of gain by exploiting the poor is repulsive:

\begin{quote}
A poor man’s goods are a block in the throat,
It makes the gullet vomit. (14.7-8)\textsuperscript{776}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{773} The term \textit{dat} is rendered as “underworld” in Pritchard, \textit{ANET}, 422.
\textsuperscript{774} Lichtheim, \textit{AEL}, 2:152-53. Seow notes that Zophar’s comments harmonize with the ancient Egyptian view which suggests that “any success that the wicked may have is only temporal, whereas Truth—Maat, the Egyptian term for moral order—transcends the present reality of evil.” Seow, \textit{Job 1-21}, 838. For translations and meanings of Maat, see K. A. D Smelik, “Ma’at,” \textit{DDD}, 534-35. For how this term relates to the notion of justice as it was understood in the ancient Near East and the Bible, see Walton, \textit{Ancient Near Eastern Thought}, 107-8.
\textsuperscript{775} Lichtheim, \textit{AEL}, 2:154.
\textsuperscript{776} Ibid., 2:154-55.
This statement depicts imagery nearly identical to that of Job 20:15 in which the wicked person is forced—in that case by God—to vomit up the ill-gotten gain. The imagery connected to illicit gain and eating continues in Amenemope and likens the lying person to a hungry deceiver who erroneously follows the cravings of his insatiable belly:

*He who makes gain by lying oaths,
His heart is misled by his belly.* (14.9-10)\(^{777}\)

The belly of the deceitful person unremittingly longs for more and more “bread” just like the greedy overeater depicted by Zophar in 20:23. The intemperate person in Amenemope can only put bread into his mouth and yet, cannot ingest (maintain) his gain. As soon as the evildoer swallows, he vomits and is left without anything:

*The big mouthful of bread—you swallow, you vomit it,
And you are emptied of your gain.* (14.17-18)\(^{778}\)

Not only is the act of regurgitation here similar to that in Job 20:15, but the imagery also corresponds to Job 20:18 in that the evildoer cannot keep any of his possessions figuratively down. He cannot enjoy his wealth and is eventually stripped of everything (Job 20:26, 28).

### 5.4 Zophar’s Imagery in Context: Two Observations

After reviewing the corresponding themes and imagery in Amenemope and other ancient Near Eastern texts, there are several observations that lend insight into how one might be able to read Zophar’s claims in Job 20. Therefore, two notable issues are considered below in light of the excerpts surveyed above. First, ancient Near Eastern texts clarify Zophar’s claim that Job corruptly obtained his former possessions. Secondly, the texts further corroborate Zophar’s ardent belief in

\(^{777}\) Ibid., 2:155.  
\(^{778}\) Ibid.
just retribution theology and, through corresponding terminology and imagery, squarely place Zophar in an ancient Near Eastern cognitive environment.

5.4.1 Job’s Wealth

Understanding the book of Job as part of the larger corpus of ancient Near Eastern literature, including Amenemope, one might come to a previously unforeseen conclusion with regard to Job’s wealth. As Zophar straightforwardly responds to Job’s comments and complaints, he seems to incorporate aspects of Job’s self-description into his own depiction of the wicked, thereby accusing Job of being wicked. Thus, Zophar has not simply made a general speech about the perceived fate of the wicked, but he has indicted Job as one of them, implying that Job approached life as an evildoer prior to his retribution. If this is the case, what does the imagery used by Zophar imply with respect to Job’s former wealth?

Studying Job alongside ancient Near Eastern literature—especially Amenemope—shows that Zophar uses well-known imagery from this environment to accuse Job of having obtained his former possessions through exploitation of the defenseless. The evidence for this claim lies in the fact that Job is devoid of his possessions. In presenting the wicked person as one who has lost his possessions (i.e., by way of vomiting them up)—after the prologue Job is devoid of his possessions—Job’s friend seems to be suggesting that he may have dishonestly obtained his former wealth.

The usage of shared imagery with Amenemope by Zophar to suggest that anyone who has lost wealth lost it because it was ill-gotten, depicts one of the main disputes between Job and his companions as to whether it is possible to judge one’s character based upon one’s set of

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779 John C. Holbert, “The Skies Will Uncover His Iniquity: Satire in the Second Speech of Zophar (Job 20),” VT 31 (1981): 178. Additionally, Zophar seems to be picking up on, and reapplying, key words that Job uses in his speech. For example, Zophar’s reuses Job’s claim to have been insulted in 19:3 (ת Calebנינִי) and reapplying it to himself in the beginning of his discourse in 20:3 (כְּלִמָּתִי). See Good, Turns of Tempest, 260.
circumstances. Though a loss of wealth could potentially be a consequence of attaining ill-gotten gain, it does not follow that a loss of wealth necessarily implies that wealth was ill-gotten.\textsuperscript{780} Zophar is apparently making an illogical suggestion based upon his preconceived view of justice, and what this looks like in terms of financial prosperity. This text is an occasion on which the poet of Job uses well-known imagery to further convey Zophar’s strict adherence to the theology of just retribution—despite his faulty logic.

5.4.2 Just Retribution in Job

A comprehensive reading of Job in its biblical context repeatedly leads to reevaluating its claims concerning the doctrine of retribution. From the commencement of the prologue, the reader observes that Job is not deserving of such great misfortune.\textsuperscript{781} This impression is seemingly confirmed when Job’s children (42:13-16), affluence (42:10, 12), and health (42:17)\textsuperscript{782} are restored to him in the prologue. Nevertheless, throughout Zophar’s discourse he embraces the doctrine of just retribution, using brilliant rhetoric and imagery that distinctly conform to his ancient Near Eastern setting, to chide his companion.

The poet of Job, however, does not always use imagery prevalent in the ancient Near East for the same theological purposes. In particular, some of the shared imagery between Job and Amenemope is distinctly used by the poet of Job to emphasize one of Zophar’s most significant theological beliefs. According to Zophar, God alone renders specific, retributive justice to evildoers.

Zophar uses the imagery of swallowing and vomiting to prove this point. In Amenemope, the earth swallows the ill-gotten gain in order to communicate that illicit goods do not last. When

\textsuperscript{780} For and elaboration on the illogical conclusions of Job’s companions see Greenstein, “Problem of Evil,” 338.

\textsuperscript{781} See for example 1:5, 8, 21-22; 2:3, 10.

\textsuperscript{782} Job’s health is inferred from his longevity (זָׁקֵן וּשְבָע יָמִים). This passage, however, notably overlooks Job’s disease in relating his restoration.
an evildoer tries to swallow the possessions of a poor person, he somewhat mysteriously cannot keep them down. There is no specific agent mentioned for vomiting in the context of this statement. In Job, however, the wicked strive to swallow their illicit possessions and God is explicitly stated to be the cause of the vomiting. In addition to the specific mentioning of God, the justification for the retribution is stated—the wicked are oppressors of the less fortunate. According to Zophar, it is exclusively God who brings justice in causing the wicked to lose their gain.\(^{783}\)

In addition to the imagery of swallowing and vomiting, Zophar uses imagery related to the floodwaters differently from the way it is used in Amenemope. In Amenemope the evil person is carried away by floodwaters in an anonymous judgment because of his deeds. However, in Job the floodwaters that carry away the wicked and their possessions are clearly depicted as being an instrument of God’s wrath.

Lastly, the imagery related to flying away is distinctively used in Job. Amenemope depicts riches flying away in order to demonstrate the inability of maintaining wealth by theft.\(^{784}\) Zophar, on the other hand, applies the imagery of flight to the wicked (i.e., their death). In Job, flying away out of sight is a consequence caused by God upon the wicked as opposed to an arbitrary punishment upon their possessions.

Ultimately, Zophar uses this imagery to demonstrate that, in his retributive theology-laden paradigm, the individual is held personally responsible by God (vv. 15, 23, 28b, 29). The poet of Job employed similar imagery to that which is found in Amenemope to suit the major theological

\(^{783}\) Understanding the swallowing and vomiting imagery in the book of Job sheds light on Prov 19:28, where the verb יָכֵב is seemingly not used properly. In Job, the wicked tries to swallow down that which they do not deserve and regurgitate it—that is, give it up. In Prov 19:28, the wicked רָשָׁעִים are depicted as consumers of iniquity—something which they are deserving of—and they do not regurgitate.

\(^{784}\) This seems to coincide with the point of the Sumerian proverb as pointed out by Denning-Bolle (“Wisdom and Dialogue,” 219): “Possessions are a sparrow in flight which can find no place to alight.”
emphasis of Job’s friends—Job is indeed the one responsible for all of the disasters that befell him and that God enacts personal retribution against him. It is not “the Moon”\textsuperscript{785} recognizing the misconduct of the wicked’s crime,\textsuperscript{786} or the “might of the Moon”\textsuperscript{787} catching the evildoer as depicted in \textit{Amenemope}. Rather, Zophar uses similar imagery to that found in \textit{Amenemope} to suggest that God might be judging Job.

\textbf{5.5 Conclusion}

Reading Zophar’s speech in the light of comparable imagery from ancient Near Eastern compositions that treat the issue of just retribution demonstrates how much Zophar’s imagery, theological concerns, and rhetoric fit within his ancient Near Eastern context. In Job 20, Zophar uses well-known ancient Near Eastern imagery, especially as employed in \textit{Amenemope}, and crafts this language to fulfill his theological and polemic objectives. Through this, Zophar’s contention emerges that Job unlawfully obtained his former possessions. Additionally, Zophar reappplies some of the images shared with \textit{Amenemope} to shed light upon, and ultimately reshape, certain aspects of the doctrine of just retribution—namely, to personalize the retribution that stems from God and proceeds straightaway to the intended victim, ultimately resulting in his death.

Both Bildad and Zophar admit that the wicked can occasionally experience prosperity, but insist that this prosperity is short-lived and culminates in a tragic demise. Conversely, Bildad and Zophar never fairly propose the logical antithesis of their belief—the temporary suffering of the righteous.\textsuperscript{788} Job, however, is now at the point where his is contemplating, perhaps, an implausible extreme—that the wicked \textit{never} suffer. This claim is anything but groundless to Job, as it is firmly

\textsuperscript{786} Ibid., 2:150, see chapter 4, lines 18-19.
\textsuperscript{787} Ibid., 2:151.
\textsuperscript{788} Longman, \textit{Job}, 271.
based upon his and other people’s experience. The wicked prosper. Job has seen it. Others have seen it. If God indeed maintains some sort of organized system of retribution, it either does not apply in Job’s situation, or it is completely partisan—favoring the wicked. This is what Job is compelled to make clear in chapter 21, in his manifesto on the prosperity of the wicked.
6 The Prosperity of the Wicked According to Job—Job 21

Up to this point in the dialogue, Job has, for the most part, made protest to God by questioning any potentially just reason for his profound misfortune. Despite predominantly addressing God, Job has also blasted his companions for their lack of support. He straightforwardly declares their worthlessness and their failure to perform their role as friends (16:1-5; 19:2-5). Nevertheless, the thrust of Job’s speeches in the second round of the dialogue (chapters 16-17, 19) has not been aimed exclusively at deconstructing the companions’ perception of just retribution.

Throughout Job’s complaint he has preserved his dignity before God, while never claiming perfection. Job cannot declare his own sinlessness any more than he can accept his friends’ accusations that his circumstances are universal consequences of wrongdoing. Ironically, Job’s uprightness prevents him from accepting that the degree to which misfortune has come upon him is proportionate to his misdeeds. Job knows that this admission would be untrue. With equal irony, however, Job’s companions’ appeals to God’s sovereign retribution upon the sinner have proven them disloyal. They considered it pious to invoke the Almighty’s system of governance in their discussion with Job, yet in doing so they have overlooked their responsibility to heed Job’s statements. Their boorish justifications of Job’s suffering, rather than empathizing with him (cf. 2:11), have permitted them to conveniently evade the authentic theological issues Job presents.

Understandably, Job has not perceived his companions’ dogma to be pertinent to his situation. This is evident in Job’s never presenting a straightforward rebuttal to his friends’ sustained fixation upon the doctrine of the punishment upon the wicked during the second round

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789 Habel, Job, 330.
of speeches. To Job, there is nothing *just* in his situation with regard to just retribution as it is explained by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Similarly, there also appears to be nothing *wise* about the traditional wisdom to which they appeal.

Thus, Job has mostly confronted God regarding his perceived injustice and has resolutely petitioned the Almighty to appear and fairly judge. Job’s responses have stemmed from an overwhelming state of personal grief, which has provoked honest, yet provocative, responses directed at God concerning his situation. As Job’s friends increasingly mentioned the fate of the wicked, and the more they suggested that Job should be included in their company, the more Job seemed to focus his attention inward or toward God.

Yet, Job has also been paying keen attention to his friends’ comments.790 Job’s attentiveness is manifest in chapter 21—his final speech of the second round—where he alas takes pains to address the arguments of his friends concerning their perceived fate of the wicked, and his inclusion in their company. Job’s response to Eliphaz’s (15:20ff.), Bildad’s (18:5ff.), and Zophar’s (20:5ff.) speeches is a calculated and definitive rejoinder against their dogma of just retribution, which they base upon traditional wisdom to identify the wicked791—with the result they accuse Job of transgression. In his rebuttal, Job conspicuously alludes to the major motifs, imagery, and language used by his companions throughout their speeches to refute their speculations concerning the destiny of the wicked and its applicability to his situation.792

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790 Longman notes that “(Job) likely feels that they have not been listening to him because they keep on making the same points that God rewards the innocent and punishes the wicked (15:20-35; 18:15-21), in spite of Job’s contrary arguments from his own experience.” Longman, *Job*, 275.
792 Ibid., 323-24.
6.1 Job’s Appeal to Experience—A Superior Standard of Reality

Unlike the speculative theorizing of Job’s friends concerning the reason for his suffering, Job is interested in the actual reasons for his agony. Job’s unawareness of the heavenly scene of the prologues, as well as the impending whirlwind speeches, prevent him from providing a qualified answer up to this point. He has thereby been compelled to express only what he has determined through his personal experience—as this is the only empirical evidence he can muster. Job communicates his experiences, for example, in 9:22-24, where he is forced to claim that God perverts justice,\footnote{See section 2.4.} while in 10:3 Job accuses God of favoring the counsel of the wicked.\footnote{See section 2.5.} God’s approval of the schemes of the wicked is expressed by Job depicting God destroying him through hunting and devouring him (10:8, 12-14). In addition, Job experiences the apex of injustice in that God delivers Job into the hand of a band of people who are indeed wicked. These men, in turn, physically abuse Job (16:10-11).\footnote{There is a conspicuous parallel to this passage in *Ludlul I*:57-69 where the sufferer experiences hardship brought about by of a band of evildoers. See Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, 32.} Because of his experience, Job is sure that his friends are misguided by their conventional reasoning, derived from their mutual authority—tradition. Thus, in chapter 21, Job diverts attention from the quixotic tradition of his friends to a pragmatic experiential perspective.\footnote{Habel observes the irony in Job appealing to experience as a basis for refuting his friends’ arguments. Throughout chapter 21, Job strives to demonstrate that it is indeed possible for the wicked to lead happy and prosperous lives which is clear through simple observation. The irony is that Job could have potentially been one of those prosperous wicked. Habel, *Job*, 324, 327.}

In order to confute the arguments of his friends, Job must cripple the foundations upon which they rest.\footnote{Wilson, *Job*, 222. Italics his.} Job challenges his companions’ *a priori* reasoning by contending that their assertions are at variance, not only with what he has communicated regarding his personal experiences.
experience—but even with universal reality\textsuperscript{798} as witnessed by those outside their community. Job contends that prosperity does not necessarily mean that someone is righteous because basic life experience testifies to the fact that the wicked indeed prosper. Thus, if in God’s divine governance the wicked can—and do—prosper, then it is not beyond reason that a righteous person might suffer.\textsuperscript{799} If Job could merely convince his friends that there is one exception to their dogmatism, then perhaps, it might be Job himself. This point seems to be at the core of Job’s disputation in chapter 21.

6.2 Job’s Intertextual Considerations

It is instinctive for the reader to strive to understand the rhetoric of Job’s response in chapter 21 within the context of the dialogues. In order for Job to challenge his friends’ positions, he must critique and, therefore, allude to much of the previous discussion. Additionally, an examination of Job’s rebuttal within the context of the entire book reveals that Job’s rejoinder actually connotes his former, personal situation as revealed in the prologue and other comments Job makes throughout his prior speeches. Analyzing Job’s discourse regarding the prosperity of the wicked in light of his personal situation as depicted in chapters 1-2 provides a fresh understanding of Job’s interactions with his friends’ accusations. In pointing out aspects of the prosperity of the wicked, Job reveals the manner in which his companions have alluded to his personal situation in order to accuse him. Thus, Job counters his classification as wicked not by simply denying guilt, but by pointing out that experience indicates that the wicked indeed experience their former blessings.

The outcry against the perceived prosperity of the wicked is particularly evident in biblical wisdom literature and the Psalms. Naturally, similar imagery and rhetoric are used in these texts.

\textsuperscript{798} Rowley, \textit{Job}, 146, Hartley, \textit{Job}, 322.
to articulate comparable views to those expressed in Job, but this is particularly evident in Job 21. Notwithstanding this, the issue of the fate of the wicked also engages the literature of the ancient Near East, as noted throughout the previous chapters. Reading several of these compositions in conjunction with this chapter—namely, the Sumerian wisdom text *The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta* and the Babylonian wisdom text *The Babylonian Theodicy*—proves helpful in understanding the biblical imagery, as well as providing an amplified view into the ancient Near Eastern thought-world within which the book of Job was written. Accordingly, this analysis of Job 21 pays keen attention to understanding Job’s dispute, not simply within the contexts of the dialogues—or even just the book—but also in the rhetorical context of the Psalms, biblical wisdom literature, and ancient Near Eastern compositions.

### 6.3 Introduction: Job’s Appeal for Quiet Consolation—vv. 2-5

Job’s companions initially appear on the scene with the intent of comforting him ([2:11]). In 15:11, Eliphaz suggests that Job should consider his friends’ dialogues—that is to say, their explanations of the doctrine of just retribution—as genuine consolations. Deeming this comment utterly ludicrous, Job counters in 16:2 by playing on his friends’ rhetoric and communicating that, instead of considering their words consolations, he considers them comforters who only bring about misery.

Broaching his friends’ supposed consolations anew in 21:2, Job pleads for his companions to simply remain quiet and heed his discourse, even if Job’s comments would potentially confound their reasoning. If the companions were to desist in striving to provide...
consolations, and grant him their sincere attention, that alone would provide enough consolation for Job to experience a bit of relief (זֹאת תְּחוּמֹתֵיכֶם [v. 2])—perhaps more consolation than anything they have said up to this point in the dialogues. Nevertheless, if past conversation is any indication of how future discourse will proceed, Job is aware that there is no chance he can convince his friends to simply listen. Job has not been consoled—at least not by these friends—and has abandoned the idea of solace through these inadequate sympathizers. Job merely desires to be heard, and so he grants his comrades permission to mock on, but only after they momentarily indulge him by enduring his speech (שָׁאוּנִי וְאָנֹכִי אֲד בֵּר וְאֲחֵר דְּבִרִּי תְלִיג [v. 3]). They are unaware that Job is aiming to destroy the foundations of their theological understanding of divine retribution.

Job speaks up in v. 4. But instead of lamenting the worthlessness of his earthy “comforters” (16:2), he puts rhetorical questions to his friends to remind them that his primary complaint is

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805 Hakham, Job, 162; Hartley, Job, 310; Seow, Job 1-21, 868.
806 Rowley, Job, 146.
807 It is difficult to argue against the idea that there is some irony in Job’s words here, suggesting that Job really does not want his companions to continue to mock him (Clines, Job 21-37, 523). Nevertheless, on two other occasions when Job petitions silence, he does so because he simply wants to speak (cf., 13:13; 33:31). Thus, v. 3b is ironic in the sense that Job does not really want to be mocked, but it also conveys the idea that Job does not care about what his friends will say afterwards. Job seems to be playing on Zophar’s words in 11:3 (Hakham, Job, 162), where he claims that Job is a mocker (ו תִלְעִיג וְאֵין מְכָל). Job reverses this accusation and asserts that if anyone is mocking—it is indeed them. Job does not want to mock or be mocked. He just wants to be heard.
808 Since the number of the verbs in this verse changes from the plural שָׁאוּנִי to the singular תְלִיג, some commentators have suggested that Job is specifically addressing Zophar. Pope, Job, 157; Rowley, Job, 146; Hakham, Job, 163; Habel, Job, 326. This, however, does not appear to be a viable reason for תְלִיג in the singular; it runs contrary to the entire thrust of Job’s speech, throughout which he makes repeated allusions to all of his friends’ speeches. Clines, on the other hand, asserts that Job cannot be addressing only Zophar here and suggests either 1) emendation to a plural which is supported by the OG second person plural καταγελάσετε, 2) regarding the current form as already a defective plural, or 3) simply accepting that variations in number tend to happen (i.e. 16:3 where the singular forms of מְרִיצְךָ כִּי תְעַנֶה apparently address all of Job’s friends—though Greenstein argues that this is a pseudo-quotatination of 6:24-26 by Job [Greenstein, “Job,” Jewish Study Bible, 1519.]). See Clines, Job 21-37, 505. Seow asserts that Job is indeed addressing all of this friends and reconstructs the verb to read til‘ig(û), suggesting that the current form resulted from an accidental metathesis of an original ה ו, with the ה subsequently being confused as a י to result in תְלִיג. Seow, Job 1-21, 878. The context of the verse suggests that Job is addressing all of his friends, yet, despite these explanations, the exact reason why תְלִיג is singular remains unclear.
“Is my complaint against a man?” (810), Job asks, implying that he never needed his friends to respond to his ordeal, but rather, to console him as he endured his personal anguish. As Job struggled with the severity of the calamity that befell him as a pure and upright man (811), and the drastic implications his situation had upon his perception of the character of God, his companions imprudently assumed to know the reason behind and solution to his state of affairs. As Job persisted in disputing their theological solution, and hence, not following their guidance, his friends became increasingly frustrated, more stringent in their conclusions, and consequently harsher in their accusations. Now Job is compelled to directly engage his companions’ wrongheadedness.

Job’s personal experience as a self-perceived victim of divine injustice has caused such frustration that in v. 4b he asks another rhetorical question: “And if [my complaint were to a man], why should I not be impatient (813)?” In other words, if Job were to have addressed his friends, they would have offered him no constructive guidance and hence, he would have every right to be distressed. In addition to this, Job despairs of any justice at all because, to his dismay, his opponent, God, is also the cause of his distress.815

Approaching his breaking point, Job commands his friends to put store in their senses instead of in their loyalty to an inapplicable tradition. Perhaps at one point Job may have been

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809 Longman, Job, 274-75.
810 Up to this juncture in Job, every time Job has expressed his complaint (810) it has been against God. Cf., Job 7:11, 13; 9:27; 10:1. See Clines, Job 21-37, 523.
811 The personal pronoun is a casus pendens and apparently emphasizes the following first person singular possessive suffix (811). See GKC §135d-f and Jouion §156.b.
812 The 8 indicates the persons against whom the complaint is made as does 78 in other contexts (i.e. 13:3). See Dhorme, Job, 309. See also Hartley, Job, 311.
813 The phrase 888 indicating impatience is corroborated by the comparable phrase 888, which is in contrastive parallel to 888 in Prov 14:29. Seow, Job 1-21, 879.
814 The locution 88 used here as an elliptical conditional phrase, “if this be the case…” See Dhorme, Job, 308; Tur-Sinai, Job, 323; Clines, Job 21-37, 506. This type of interrogative clause is used to express a direct question after the interrogative 7 appears in a preceding clause. See Jouion §161.e.
815 Seow, Job 1-21, 869.
more open to their guidance.\textsuperscript{816} but now he pleads for his friends to be moved by observation and experience. Job directs his companions to turn, look at him and be astonished ($^8_{17}\text{לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים}$) that, despite their instruction, he is still in a horrendous state of being. Therefore, Job desires that his friends look upon him “as a human face and not just as an occasion for theological talk.”\textsuperscript{818} Job hopes, upon his friends seeing his shredded and putrid skin (2:7-8; 7:5; 30:28, 30), his gauntness (17:7; 19:20), and, perhaps, smelling his odious breath (19:8)—that just maybe, by his friends once again beholding the disfigured man over whom they once wept (2:12)—they would finally listen ($^{819}_{19}\text{לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים}$) and become convinced that he is actually in dire need of their compassion, and not of their opinions. As Wilson states, “(t)o look at Job, to really see his suffering and to empathize with his plight, is to be astounded by the lack of congruence between the theory of retribution and Job’s actual experience.”\textsuperscript{820} 

Job’s appeal is indeed for naught. Job’s friends certainly will not heed their experience, Job’s experience, or anyone else’s for that matter.\textsuperscript{821} Despite imminent disappointment at the hands of his presumptuous friends, Job is constrained to address the major conflict that has developed between their theology and his experience by appealing to universal observations. For this speech, Job finally shifts the plane of his argument from the vertical directed at the divine, to the horizontal, addressing his companions and presenting argumentation which, in theory, should be the \textit{coup de grâce} of their retributive ideology.

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\textsuperscript{816} Cf. 6:24. Nevertheless by the end of the first round of speeches, Job is already asking for quiet so that he might be able to speak (cf. 13:13).
\textsuperscript{817} The \textit{hiphil} second person plural imperative construction $^8_{17}\text{לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים}$ is a unique form in the Hebrew Bible and one might expect a \textit{ṣere} in the second syllable as opposed to the \textit{patach}. Nevertheless, the \textit{patach} is not completely unconventional in this form, as is noted in \textit{GKC} §67.v, thereby making emendation unnecessary. Dhorme suggests that the \textit{hiphil} form $^8_{17}\text{לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים}$ takes on a meaning comparable to that of the \textit{niphal} in 18:20, making the verb intransitive, and providing good sense to the phrase $^8_{17}\text{לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים}$. Dhorme, \textit{Job}, 309.
\textsuperscript{818} Seow, \textit{Job} 1-21, 869.
\textsuperscript{819} The gesture of placing the hand of the mouth is to remain silent in order to listen; see Greenstein, “Problem of Evil,” 357-58.
\textsuperscript{820} Wilson, \textit{Job}, 224.
\textsuperscript{821} See commentary on 21:29 in section 6.4.5.2.
6.4 *The Prosperity of the Wicked*—vv. 6-34

Job’s friends have advanced a thesis which alleges that sin produces suffering. They have inferred from this premise that suffering, therefore, proves sin. In Job’s speeches, he has explicitly questioned the applicability of the first assumption to his personal situation, and has denied the second presumption. Now Job unequivocally opposes his friends’ presumptions by challenging their claims, which depict the life of a righteous person as attractive and carefree, and the wicked experiencing misfortune. Job is particularly concerned that God’s moral system is so corrupt that the wicked enjoy the life that tradition promises for the righteous. In 21:6-34, Job presents empirical evidence consisting of his own and others’ personal testimonies, to demonstrate that the prosperity of the wicked confounds his comrades’ simplistic theological reasoning, as well as demonstrates its inapplicability to his situation.

6.4.1 *The Thriving of the Wicked*—vv. 6-7, 13, 17-18

6.4.1.1 *Job’s Alarm at the Life of the Wicked*—vv. 6-7

Upon Job considering the implications of his following statements, he is stricken with such horror (זָׁכִּית וְנִבְהָּלְתִי) that his body is overtaken by intense shuddering (וְאָׁחָ֖ז בְּשָׁרִ֣י פָּלְצַ֑ת). Job communicates in v. 7 what he recalls that causes him dismay to the point of trembling. Drawing

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822 Andersen, *Job*, 214.
823 Ibid., 215.
825 Hakham notes the syntactical resemblance between פָּלְצַת אָׁחָ֖ז בְּשָׁרִי and קֶדֶ֑רֶם אָׁחֲז֣וּ שָׁעַר (18:20) and observes that these types of sayings exchange the holder and that which is being held. Hakham further claims that these phrases are synonymous with the expected syntactical structure where the verb is conjugated in the passive suggesting that the subject has been overcome with a given sentiment (i.e., “Shuddering seizes my body,” is synonymous with, “My body shudders”). Hakham, *Job*, 163, n. 3. It is certainly reasonable to suggest that these phrases have comparable meanings, but Hakham problematically assumes the subject of פָּלְצַת to be the normally feminine noun פָּלְצָת (see e.g., Isa 21:4; Ezek 7:18; Ps 55:6). It is perhaps more judicious to understand the subject of פָּלְצַת to be פָּלְצַת and interpret the phrase to say, “My flesh seizes trembling.” This reading retains the meaning of the similar idiom in 18:20 but also eliminates the potential disharmony in gender between the subject and the verb. See Clines, *Job 21-37*, 506; Seow, *Job 1-21*, 880.
upon personal experience, he casts a series of rhetorical questions expressing his displeasure and confusion of his situation. Job asks, “Why do the wicked thrive (מעוט לרשעים יחיי)?” He continues with, “Why do the wicked grow strong (מעוט לרשעים)?” He concludes by asking, “Why do the wicked grow powerful (מעוט לרשעים)?”

Job’s personal hurt is evident in asking why the wicked are able to grow powerful (גבר). One of the ways in which the related phrase גבר חייל is used in the Bible is to refer to a person who is successful and respected. This is evident, for example, in the description of Boaz in Ruth 2:1 (גִּבוֹר חָיִל לְאִישָׁה אִיש מוֹדָע (וּלְנָעֳמִי מידע). Job is also portrayed as formerly being wealthy (1:3, 16-17) as well as respected (29:7-15). Yet, according to Job, it is the wicked who continue to flourish in their strength and wealth, whereas he has lost both.

Ironically, Job expresses no trepidation over his friends’ first veiled, now overt, supposed divinely supported threats of retribution. Job is not even dismayed because of the horrendous circumstances that have befallen him (contra Eliphaz in 4:5 (תגע עדה ותב הֵל)). Job trembles in fear because of what the happy life for the wicked implies about how God governs the world. God’s governance is blatantly unjust. Thus, Job puts forth these rhetorical questions at the outset of his

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826 This is implied by Job’s remembering (יָזָכָר) those things upon which he expounds in vv. 6-34. See Wilson, Job, 224. Edwin Good also makes the interesting observation that Job does not ask whether the wicked prosper, but why the wicked indeed prosper. Edwin M. Good, "The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job," in The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job (eds. Leo Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 61. This too supports the idea that Job speaks from what he has observed as opposed to tradition.

827 Some commentators have suggested that עתק is used in this context to mean that the wicked are able to grow into old age. This proposal is based upon how עתק is used in the Hebrew Bible to indicate that someone or something grows, or becomes venerated (e.g., Ps 6:8 (מעוט לרשעים)) as well as the comparable meaning for its Aramaic and Ugaritic cognates. Hartley, Job, 313, n. 9; Clines, Job 21-37, 506, 525; Longman, Job, 276. Nevertheless, the very next clause states that the wicked grow in strength (גָּׁבְרוּ חָׁיִל), which makes it more plausible to understand עתק as depicting “moving forward, proceeding” in life. See, for example, Gen 12:8: 26:22, where עתק is used to express progressing on a journey. This latter sense also has comparable meaning in its Akkadian cognate etēqu (CAD, E, 385-86, especially definition c). See also BDB, 801; HALOT, 1:905, 2:1955; and Seow, Job 1-21, 880. Job’s observation is that the wicked experience thriving lives and not just that they are privileged to see old age.

828 Despite there being no explicit subject expressed in v. 7b-c communicating that which Job remembers and causes his terror, the prosperity of the wicked is certainly implied. Clines, Job 21-37, 506.

829 Hakham, Job, 164.

830 For commentators who have deduced similar implications with regard to Job’s dismay in v. 6, see Rowley, Job, 147; Clines, Job 21-37, 506, 524-525.
pointed, verbal assault on his companions’ insistent declarations of the imminent, life-threatening retribution that befalls the wicked.\(^{831}\)

Job’s companions have demonstrated the audacity to claim that the wicked perish in the face of their friend, who gradually wastes away before their eyes. For all intents and purposes, Job has no chance at ever living a vibrant life. Indeed, he seems to be approaching a premature death—a clear indication of wickedness in keeping with his friends’ viewpoint. Job counters that the wicked, however, show no signs of death—an observation that causes Job to implore his friends to reconsider their paradigm.

6.4.1.1.1 Jeremiah’s Affinity to Job

Throughout Job’s questioning, he demonstrates a close affinity to other biblical characters who have expressed extreme misgivings over the injustice of the thriving lives of the wicked, from a position of personal suffering. Most notably, Jeremiah’s experiences compelled him to petition for divine intervention against the prosperity of the wicked (12:3). While Jeremiah’s enemies devised murderous schemes against him (11:19), thereby causing him intense anguish, he repeatedly trusted in God’s righteousness (11:20; 20:12). Nevertheless, despite Jeremiah’s appeal to the righteous character of God, he does not perceive that God legitimately remunerates people according to their conduct (12:1; cf., 17:10)—especially the wicked. As Greenstein points out, “Jeremiah’s expression of distress over the prosperity of the wicked follows upon his account of having been the victim of an assassination plot. His accusation of God is barely removed from the personal provocation that seems to have prompted it.”\(^{832}\) Therefore, with his life in jeopardy by

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\(^{831}\) See Eliphaz’s confident affirmation discussed in chapter 3 that the wicked live in dire anticipation of deadly retribution by the hand of God (15:20-24, 30, 32). Bildad likewise suggests that terror is characteristic of the life of all of the wicked and notably claims, through the imagery of light and darkness, that the lives of the wicked are cut short (18:5-6, 18 [see section 4.1]). Zophar similarly depicts the wicked dying before their time (20:11) as well as contending that the joy of the wicked is fleeting (20:5 [see section 5.2.1]). Job proceeds to argue that these assertions are reprehensible in light of the empirical evidence of the prosperity of the wicked.

\(^{832}\) Greenstein, “Jeremiah as an Inspiration,” 104.
the hands of these very wicked, the prophet questions God concerning why their way (i.e. life) inevitably prospers (משהו שָׁלֹם וּבְשָׁלֹם [12:1]).

Jeremiah unquestionably would have benefitted from a just system of retribution were one to have been operative in his situation. Yet as Jeremiah faithfully pursued his call as prophet, he was the victim of a conspiracy (18:18, 22), suffered social (20:7-8; 26:8-15) and physical persecution (20:2), was falsely accused (37:11-16), was placed in jail despite being innocent (38:14-28), and feared for his life at the hands of evildoers (11:19, 18:23, 38:4). While the prophet endured the hardship of being God’s servant, those evildoers who mistreated him were privileged with peaceful lives irrespective of their treachery (שָׁלוּ כָּל בֹּגְדֵי בָּגֶד [12:1]). Nevertheless, as in Job’s case, there appears to be no invariable method of discerning why the wicked experience good fortune, and, therefore, Jeremiah and Job both implicate God in their grievance and are unambiguous in pointing out that God is completely responsible for this injustice. It is God who has firmly planted the wicked who took root and produced fruit (נְט עְתָׁם גּ וּשְׁרָשׁוּ יֵלְכוּ גּ וּעָׁשוּ פֶרִי [12:2]). Hence, Jeremiah and Job deduce that the prosperity of the wicked is an overt sign of divine injustice. 833

6.4.1.1.2 Demise of the Wicked in the Psalms and Wisdom

Why would Jeremiah consider the prosperity of the wicked a sign of divine injustice? The answer seems to lie in the fact that much of ancient Israel’s wisdom literature and psalms are replete with assertions that the wicked come to a nasty end, demonstrating that the retributive paradigm was generally accepted. For example, the author of Psalm 73 makes complaints similar to those of Jeremiah and Job with regard to the prosperous life of the wicked. The psalmist admits to jealousy upon observing the peace granted to the wicked (73:3-5) despite committing a variety

833 Among the other prophets who questioned the divine tolerance of evildoers are Mal 3:15 and Hab 1:13.
of overt sins (73:5-11), while simultaneously growing in wealth (73:12). At this point in the psalm an outcry against divine injustice based upon the psalmist’s observations might be expected as was the case with Job and Jeremiah. However, in lieu of, expressing his observations as protest, the psalmist concedes that the prosperity of the wicked is an issue that is beyond his understanding (73:16, 22) and accordingly invokes divine retribution to settle the quandary. God will eventually ruin the wicked for their immorality by utterly sweeping them away by terrors (כָּסְפוּ תּוּ מֵים-כִּלְחָדוֹת [73:19]). The psalmist reconsiders his observations of the wicked’s prosperity upon drawing near to God (73:17, 28) and concludes that justice eventually will come upon the wicked through fear and death. These are precisely the consequences repeatedly depicted by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

The wisdom tradition accords with the assertions of Job’s friends and the psalmist. Fear of destruction is appointed for the wicked and not the wise (Prov 3:25). The wicked will indeed be cut off and meet a quick and violent end before their time because they do not fear the Lord (Prov 10:25, 27). Job opposes much of what biblical wisdom has to say about this issue as well as the confident views of his friends. His experience dictates his response, that the wicked thrive in life and increase in strength with no fear of a sudden, violent death. These observations sabotage the applicability of the retributive principles outlined by Job’s comrades, the Psalms and Proverbs. Again Greenstein’s comments are apt: “[o]bviously if the wicked succeed it attests to the failure of the conventional biblical principle of retribution; it demonstrates the same systemic failure one finds in the suffering of the innocent.”

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834 Another reaction could be that of Qohelet, who gives himself over to hedonism upon observing the prosperity of the wicked (Eccl 7:15; 8:14-15). Qohelet comes to believe that because there is no reward and punishment (all die just the same), it is best to enjoy the pleasures you are fortunate enough to be granted by God.

835 Seow, Job 1-21, 870.

836 Greenstein, "Jeremiah as an Inspiration," 103. Greenstein suggests Jer 12:1-2 is the source material for Job’s complain regarding the prosperity of the wicked in chapter 21.
Prosperity in Life and Haste in Death—v. 13

In a mode characteristic of the dialogues, Job proceeds to object to specific comments made by his comrades. As stated above, Job refutes the notion of the wicked invariably despairing throughout life and suffering an abrupt death by claiming that the wicked live flourishing lives. In v. 13 Job seemingly takes issue with Eliphaz’s contention that the wicked experience daily turmoil with their days being numbered (15:20), as well as Zophar’s claim that the prosperity of the wicked will not endure (20:21). Job counters his companions’ declarations by avowing the strict opposite. The wicked spend all of their days in carefree prosperity (יְמֵיהֶם בְּטָה), and do not live conscious of their limited time before their destruction. According to Job, the wicked quickly perish at an undetermined moment void of abnormal maladies or sudden disaster (וּבְרֶג עַשָּׁר יֵחָׁת).

Reflecting exclusively upon Job’s circumstances facilitates understanding why Eliphaz and Zophar suggest Job’s guilt. Job indeed exhibits multiple abnormal maladies causing him to slowly...
deteriorate, conscious of his impending death. This is antithetical to the wicked, who Job claims live quality lives, and when they do die, go down peacefully with no trials. They do not succumb to a horrible death like Job’s children, nor do they endure a torturous period of physical and emotional agony like Job himself. Thus, Job’s friends claim that retribution comes upon the wicked by pointing out the specific suffering that Job endures—namely, that the wicked live destitute lives awaiting their demise—thereby including him among the wicked. Job counters this by indicating that their retributive reasoning is not only wrong, but does not cohere with his observations indicating that the wicked thoroughly enjoy their lives and experience prosperity until the day they die an uneventful death.

6.4.1.3 Does the Lamp of the Wicked Wane?—v. 17

In an even more explicit response to his friends, Job parodies Bildad’s statement, in which he uses the concepts of light and darkness to illustrate the traditional claim that the wicked experience turmoil ultimately leading to a premature death. This motif of physical harm to the wicked, commencing with Eliphaz’s veiled threat that the wicked lion’s teeth will be broken (4:10-11), has developed and escalated throughout the dialogues, and is taken up once again, expanded and intensified in the second round of speeches. This is exemplified through Bildad’s assertion in 18:5-6, 18, where he refers to the impending death of the wicked by stating that they are deprived of light. Job directly rebuts Bildad’s assertion that the light/lamp of the wicked wanes (cf. 18:5a, 6b יִדְעָךְ מָׁה נֵר רְשָׁעִים יִדְעָךְ) by once again resorting to rhetorical questioning. “How often does the lamp of the wicked wane (כֵּשֶׁה רְשָׁעִים)? Job counters Bildad’s claim by stating that the well-lit lamp, which is a symbol of a pleasant life, belongs to the wicked. This lamp rarely

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843 Pope, Job, 158; Hakham, Job, 165; Hartley, Job, 314; Seow, Job 1-21, 871.
844 Wilson, Job, 229; Longman, Job, 277.
845 See the discussion pertaining to this imagery in Job, the Bible, and ancient Near Eastern compositions in section 4.1
846 As was discussed in chapters 3-5 of the present work.
abates to the point of being extinguished—which is a figure of speech relating God’s punishment upon the wicked for their evildoing (cf. Prov 13:9; 20:20; 24:20).\(^{847}\) Job’s friends are simply not speaking truthfully and therefore, Job caricatures the non-applicable traditional wisdom upon which they depend to condemn him.\(^{848}\)

Job not only draws attention to the infrequency by which the wicked suffer a premature death but, echoing Bildad’s comments once again (cf. ἐν ἐν 18:12),\(^{849}\) Job poses another rhetorical question\(^{850}\) to disparage the claim that calamity falls upon all of the wicked during their lives (חיים).\(^{851}\) The wicked do not experience consistent punishment for their misdeeds because God withholds his wrath. Job unambiguously blames God for this inconsistency as he continues to question in v. 17, asking, “How often does God distribute [to them their] lots in his anger? (חֲבָׁלִים) Job, once again, does not deny the possibility that calamity could fall

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\(^{847}\) Hartley, Job, 316.

\(^{848}\) According to Greenstein, Job’s comments in 21:17 follow a “series of pseudo-proverbs that mimic [his friends’] advice” starting in chapter 12. Job maintains this tone throughout the second round of speeches and proceeds to undermine traditional wisdom, showcased in the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32) and thoughtlessly recited by his friends, through mockery. Greenstein, “Parody as a Challenge,” 74-76, quotation from p. 74.

\(^{849}\) Pope, Job, 159. It is most reasonable to consider Job’s comments to be in response to Bildad’s similarly worded assertions. Nevertheless, the Israelite proverbial tradition in general indicated that calamity (חֲבָלִים) would fall upon the wicked. See, for example, the fate of the wicked (חֲבָלִים) suffering their calamity (חֲבָלִים) in an amplified report concerning the retribution brought upon the wicked in Prov 24:19-22. See Wilson, Job, 230-31.

\(^{850}\) The interrogative הִיּוּ should be understood at the beginning of all phrases of vv. 17-18. Hakham, Job, 166.

\(^{851}\) Despite the rhetorical connection with Bildad in 18:12, Habel suggests that Job is also alluding to Zophar’s most recent speech in chapter 20. Habel states, “(i)n response to Zophar’s speech depicting the end of the wicked in gruesome detail, Job responds by announcing that the expected ‘calamity’ does not fall. The entire system of allotted destinies espoused by the friends is exposed as pure fabrication in the light of historical reality and human experience.” Habel, Job, 328. Whether one considers Job’s comments to be in response to Bildad’s or Zophar’s claims, the point remains that if traditional wisdom is not altogether consistent, then the system of divine retribution is not unconditionally trustworthy.

\(^{852}\) Commentators dispute over whether חֲבָלִים should be understood as derived from חֶבֶל I “to bind” (BDB, 286) and חֶבֶל II “to act corruptly” (BDB, 287). Several commentators who favor חֲבָלִים generally understand חֲבָלִים as the plural form of the derivative חֶבֶל “pain, pang.” For example, Hartley notes both meanings in vacillating over which is best for this context, stating, “(p)ain’ seems to be the best alternative. Even though hebel is usually restricted to ‘birth pangs,’ like other words primarily restricted to the birth process, the term may describe the most agonizing pains caused by the severest suffering.” Hartley, Job, 316, n. 5. This reading is supported by the Greek and Vulgate renderings rendering of监督检查 and dolorum “pangs.” See also Rowley, Job, 149, Habel, Job, 323. On the other hand, Clines appeals to Mic 2:10 (חֲבָלִים הָעֹדֶה מֵאָדָם) and suggests that חֲבָלִים, is from חֶבֶל “destruction,” a derivative of חֶבֶל II. Clines, Job 21:37, 511. Seow notes that the Targum’s reading of חֲבָלִים “lots” which he contends is a derivative of חֶבֶל “rope” (from חֶבֶל I). Appealing to Amos 7:17 (חֲבָלִים עַל וָאָדָם), Seow concludes that “hebel is a synonym of heleq, ‘lot,’ originally a plot of land that has been assigned, but later simply a ‘lot’ in the broadest sense.
upon the wicked, nor does he deny that they may experience pain. Rather, Job prudently refrains from suggesting that catastrophe is constant in all situations, which is an assertion that thwarts just retribution as an invariable system.\textsuperscript{853}

Job’s third question in v. 17 recalls Zophar’s words of warning at the end of chapter 20. There, Zophar asserts that there will indeed be a designated day of wrath for the wicked (יֹם א פ [20:28]). On this day, according to Zophar, God will apportion to the wicked their destined lot (חֵלֶק אדָּם רָּשָׁע) for their misdeeds. In 21:17 Job rebuts the contention that the wicked meet an allotted destiny which God supposedly dispenses in his anger (וְיֵחַלֵַק ב א פ”).\textsuperscript{854} The day which Zophar so confidently refers to, simply stated, never comes to pass.

If Job’s friends’ doctrine were consistent with reality, then the wicked should be terrorized until God snuffs out their light, cutting them down before they reach old age. Nevertheless, it is Job whose life appears to be fading away and who experiences the dread of his impending death. Thus, it is evident that Job reacts in v. 17 to his friends’ persistence in counting him as wicked through their usage of imagery related to light and darkness, calamity, and God’s wrath. Nevertheless, their banal doctrine is not in accordance with fact and Job’s friends have yet to deal with the observed truths that Job presents. In fact, the companions’ suggestions are so amiss in Job’s opinion, that he provides rhetorical connections to each of his friends’ speeches in the second round in order to parody their views.\textsuperscript{855}

6.4.1.4 How often are the Wicked Blown Away?—v. 18

\textsuperscript{853} Seow, Job 1-21, 886. This suggestion fits the context being that it is consistent with the idea of God distributing painful retribution as the wicked’s lot. See also Hakham, Job, 166.
\textsuperscript{854} Seow, Job 1-21, 872.
\textsuperscript{855} Habel, Job, 325.

Greenstein notes that “(i)t is characteristic of Job that he parodies traditional wisdom, especially that cited by his companions. An unambiguous example is the following. Proverbs 13:9 conveys the principle of just retribution using this image:…Bildad, in response to Job in which he insists that the wicked receive their just deserts, elaborates the second line of this verse: (18:5…) Job (21:17) objects to such a piety, proved flagrantly false by his particular case and challenges the truth of its claims:…” Greenstein, "Parody as a Challenge," 75-76.
In Jeremiah, divine retribution comes twice as calamity (כָּז) in the form destructive winds and scattering (18:17; 49:32). Therefore, it is not surprising that Job’s next question, in v. 18, depicts the calamity (כָּז) being questioned in v. 17 as destruction coming through wind. Job asks, “[How often] are [the wicked] like straw before the wind (רוּחַ)?” The mentioning of botanic imagery (i.e., straw [תֶבֶן]) in the context of just retribution is equally unsurprising in light of the fact that both Bildad (8:11-14, 16-19) and Eliphaz (15:32-33) utilized plant imagery to encourage Job to return to God from his deviation. Job’s second question of v. 18 neatly parallels the first, thereby corroborating the idea of Job using his friend’s rhetoric against their own arguments. Job concludes this section of questioning by asking, “[How often are the wicked] like chaff [that] a whirlwind sweeps away (וּכְמֹץ גְּנָׁב תּוּ סוּפָה)?”

Additionally, Job’s mentioning of botanic imagery—particularly straw (תֶבֶן) and chaff (פָּן) being destroyed by wind—can be understood as more than simply a rejoinder to his friends’ assertions. Through this imagery, Job rejects traditional wisdom’s view of just retribution in general, which is similarly depicted through botany in other sections of this Bible. Comparable terminology to Job 21:18 is found in Ps 1:4, where the psalmist states that the wicked (הָרְשָׁעִים) are like chaff that the wind drives away (וּכְמֹץ גְּנָׁב תּוּ סוּפָה), as opposed to the healthy tree pictured in the preceding line. Additionally, Jeremiah’s prophecy of impending divine retribution upon Israel corresponds rhetorically to both Job 21:18 and Ps 1:14. Speaking on behalf of God, Jeremiah states, “And I will scatter them like stubble blown by a desert wind (כָּז קָפֹלָנָם רוּחַ).”

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856 Wilson, Job, 232-33.
857 The interrogative word כָּמָּה, which is explicitly stated at the beginning of v. 17, continues to be implied in both lines of v. 18. Dhorme, Job, 316; Clines, Job 21-37, 511.
858 See sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.4.
859 See section 3.5.3.
860 The phrase גְּנָׁב תּוּ סוּפָה appears to function as a relative clause in which the initial כָּז is understood. Clines, Job 21-37, 511.
861 See also Pss 11:6; 35:5; 83:14; Jer 4:11-12, which speak of evildoers suffering their due fate through wind (רוּחַ).
Isaiah uses similar terminology in an oracle delivered against the enemies of Israel. The prophet states that Israel’s adversaries will be “chased away like chaff of the mountains before the wind, and as a whirl of chaff before the whirlwind” (מִדְבָׁר [13:24]). Job uses this same imagery of scattered agricultural rubbish to unambiguously question the doctrine which his friends and other biblical writers confirm. In fact, Job makes the claim that he, not the wicked, experiences the fury of God pursuing him like dry straw flying away in the wind (וְרֻדִי כְּמֹץ הָּרִים לִפְנֵי רוּח  וּכְג לְגָל לִפְנֵי סֻפָׁה [17:13]). It is important to note that in vv. 17-18 Job stops short of claiming that the lamp of the wicked never fails or that they never experience calamity as one who is like debris in the face of a whirlwind. Job’s rhetoric suggests that the expected answer to his questions in these verses is “rarely”—perhaps “very few times, if any”—but not “never.” That is to say, Job leaves open the possibility, for instance, that the lamps of some of the wicked are occasionally snuffed out. However, unlike his friends’ claims, Job insists that there is no distinguishable and predictable system that determines the constancy, consistency, and exact manner by which the wicked meet their end. Notwithstanding, Job suggests that in most situations, the lamp of the wicked brightly shines with nothing endangering its continuance.

This inconsistency is precisely why the doctrine of just retribution cannot be considered impeccable—regardless of its applicability in certain situations. This dogma leaves open the possibility for the wicked to receive undeserved rewards and for the righteous to receive disproportionate punishment. Coinciding with this, if there is just one exception to the doctrine of just retribution that can be demonstrated through the thriving of the wicked, then Job might

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862 Habel, Job, 328.
863 Hartley, Job, 316.
864 Clines, Job 21-37, 510. See also Pope, Job, 159; Rowley, Job, 149; Hartley, Job, 316.
865 Hartley, Job, 316.
experience the same phenomenon on the opposite pole. Whether or not Job’s friends are willing to accept his reasoning from experience, Job demonstrates his unwillingness to fall into the same inflexible fallacious dogma of his friends.

6.4.2 The Offspring of the Wicked—vv. 8-9, 11-12, 19-21

The death of Job’s children is clearly the most horrific of all the terrible events that transpires in the prologue. In contempt of this fact, Job’s friends have insensitively contended that the wicked are deprived of offspring, while simultaneously alluding to the fact that Job’s lack of children may be an indication of evildoing on his behalf. This motif first appears early in the dialogues when Eliphaz declares the blessedness of the man whom God corrects (5:17). After commencing his discussion in the third person—referring to the “blessed man” who is disciplined by God—Eliphaz shifts and personally addresses Job in the second person (5:19), thereby, applying the blessing of the disciplined man to Job. Eliphaz ultimately makes the provocative claim that those who receive the correction from God are blessed with countless children (5:25). Contrarily, according to Eliphaz, the godless are sterile (15:34). This contention is reinforced by Bildad, who asserts that the wicked leave no posterity (18:19), and Zophar (20:26, 28), who illustrates the destruction of the evildoer’s entire household. Job’s friends’ flippant attitude concerning his personal situation becomes evident by the end of the second round of speeches. Job’s children are dead because of his sin.

Job perceives his friends’ accusations and, because of this, mentions the well-being of the wicked’s children in his last statement concerning their prosperity (vv. 8-9, 11-12, 19-21). Not only does the contented state and security of the children of the wicked run against that which Job’s friends have said, the simple fact that they enjoy the company of children, understood in

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866 Clines, Job 21-37, 526.
867 Ibid., 525. Cf. Prov 12:3; Ps 102:28.
light of Job’s loss of his offspring, demonstrate that the divine retribution paradigm is proved false when applied to Job’s situation.

6.4.2.1 Children Established…Home Safety—vv. 8-9

Commencing in v. 8, Job contrasts the personal case of his ill-fated offspring with the prosperity of the wicked and their progeny.\(^{868}\) Whereas Job’s children died quickly, the children of the wicked stand strong from generation to generation (\(^{869}\)Their children are always present and never abandon them to live in distant places. The lineage of the wicked is completely secure and faces no threat of extinction—a point which is distinctly contrary to what Job’s friends have repeatedly claimed.\(^{870}\) Thus, Job sternly “counters both the argument that nothing gained by wrongdoing is passed on to the children as well as the escape clause in the doctrine of retribution that, if an arrogant person does enjoy life, the punishment due him will fall on his children (e.g., 18:19; 20:21).”\(^{871}\)

The impact of Job’s reference to the children is further perceived through his next comment on their happiness. The wicked are blessed with the opportunity of seeing the success of their children during their lives (\(^{872}\)as well as boast in the respectable status of one

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\(^{868}\) Pope, Job, 158.

\(^{869}\) Some commentators are troubled with the tautology of the phrase והעון נבוך לך בישראל עולם—most commonly of which is which is not represented in the OG’s rendering of ο παρεσκευάζειν αυτῇ κατὰ ζωήν “Their seed according to their soul.” Other commentators resort to emendation (e.g., emending העון to דוד [cf. Ball, Job, 290, Dhomne, Job, 310]). Nevertheless, phrase בעון ענים יד in Ps 89:22 provides an interesting parallel to העון יד in that the verb יד is used with יד depicting the authoritative establishment of a person. This could be the significance of these two words together as well in this context and consequently, the phrase לעון יד עני is intelligible. Hartley, Job, 312, n. 1.

\(^{870}\) Hakham, Job, 164. See for example, how the related word ענים is used in Ps 93:1 to depict the establishment of the world (זרא הנפש בחלまとめ). The idea of offspring being securely established is especially reflected in Ps 102:29 where the children of the servants of God are established (זרא נפש בחלまとめ). This same idea is reflected in Ps 89:5 (זרא נפש בחלまとめ). Additionally, cf. 2 Sam 7:12; 1 Chron 17:11. Seow, Job 1-21, 880.

\(^{871}\) Seow, Job 1-21, 880.

\(^{872}\) Hartley, Job, 314. Cf. Ps 17:14, in which the psalmist claims that God fills the belly of the wicked with God’s treasures (ותפלו מלא תשון), the wicked are satisfied with their children (ותפלו מלא תשון), and leave their wealth to their offspring (ותפלו מלא תשון).

\(^{873}\) Hakham, Job, 164.
who has descendants. The mention of זֶר ע and צֶאֱצָא together in v. 8 distinctly alludes to Eliphaz’s comments in 5:25, where he promises a multitude of offspring to Job upon his accepting correction (רֵאֵשׁ צֶאֱצָא הָעַד בֵּית הוֹ). Job calls attention to Eliphaz’s rhetoric and argues the exact opposite—the wicked, not the righteous, have the large, happy families despite their refusal to acknowledge God.

While Eliphaz and Bildad emphasize that the wicked die childless, Zophar specifically states that disaster befalls the entire house of the wicked—that is, all of the inhabitants of the household and all of their possessions (20:28). Job counters, stating that his observations plainly contradict the fact that the wicked live in peaceful houses (void of any angst de or anxiety of potentially sudden disasters upon them or their descendants. Job additionally repudiates Eliphaz’s dogma that the fear of punishment supposedly unnerves the godless (15:20-21, 24), even though that is also what traditional Israelite wisdom conveys. Again, Prov 3:25 explicitly states, “Do not be afraid of sudden disaster (מִפּוֹחַ ד), or of the ruin of the wicked that will come.” According to this traditional wisdom exhibited through Proverbs and Job’s companions, the downfall of the wicked is inextricably linked with sudden fear. Job makes clear through allusion to the house of the wicked that he considers his friends’ obsession with the wicked being terrified of retribution upon them and their children, to be utterly delusional.

874 Clines, Job 21-37, 526.
875 Ibid., 507; Seow, Job 1-21, 870.
876 The words צֶאֱצָא and צֶאֱצָא appear together in Isa 44:3 and 48:19 in contexts which demonstrate that the ability to reproduce is a blessing from God.
877 Andersen, Job, 215.
878 Hakham, Job, 164. See section 5.2.3.2.3 for exposition of 20:28.
879 The usage of the preposition מ in this context is explained as “a privative marker, that is, it marks what is missing or unavailable”; IBHS §11.2.11.e.(2), italics theirs. See also GKC §119.w.(1).
880 Hartley, Job, 314.
881 Clines, Job 20-21, 526.
882 It seems most reasonable to suggest that Job is making reference to Zophar’s most recent allusion to the house of the wicked. Nevertheless, Job’s reference to the dwelling place (v. 9), and hence to the household of the wicked, could conceivably be a response to a combination of his friends’ comments. Job may be making reference to Eliphaz’s statement in 5:24 where he promises Job that his tent will be safe upon receiving correction (Clines, Job, 241
Thus, Job concludes that his friends’ contention, that the loss of one’s children invariably signifies punishment from God, is absurd. Job, in fact, contends that he experiences the symptoms of his companions’ description of wickedness because the rod of God, for some reason, is upon him and not the wicked. This idea initially emerges in 9:34, where Job complains that there is no arbiter to remove the rod of God from upon him (יָׁסֵר מֵעַ֥ד יָשֵׁבְתּ). In 21:9, Job makes a rhetorical connection to 9:34 in mentioning God’s rod, and declares that the wicked do not experience God’s punishment (וְלֹא שֵבֶט אֱלֹהִים עֲלֵיהֶם). Whereas Job depicts himself as indefinitely receiving punishment, the wicked are not even vaguely familiar with the rod of correction and are thus spared divine chastisement.

6.4.2.2 Picturesque Contentment—vv. 11-12

Job’s speech, however, transcends simply calling attention to the futility of applying the rubric of an individual’s children to assess their level of righteousness. Job points out that the children of the wicked live in picturesque happiness which demonstrates that the rubric his friends propose is fictitious. The happiness of the wicked is anything but a façade that eventually collapses leading to the exposure and demise of the wicked, culminating in their prosperity ending within a generation. Instead, the godless send forth their prosperous young ones to play like a flock (וְיִלְדֵיהֶם יְרֵקָהּ֣) and watch their children dance about (םּעֲוִילֵיהֶם יְשָׁלַחְוּ כָּבָּדָֽם). This unrestrained
merriment ostensibly quiets the traditional argument that the children of the wicked are punished and cursed, and ultimately eradicated, because of their wicked parents.\textsuperscript{889}

Not only are the evildoers’ children numerous—not only are they cheerful—but Job declares that they are also constantly festive, singing and dancing to the sound of their musical instruments (תֹף, נָשָא).\textsuperscript{892} This runs contrary to what Zophar just asserted in his last speech upon claiming that the joy (שִמְחָה) of the evildoer disappears (20:5). Job contests this assertion and counters, stating that the wicked delight in satisfying lives, privileged to watch their children rejoice to the sound of the flute (וְיִשְמְחוּ לְקוֹל עוּגָׁב).\textsuperscript{893} Even though Eliphaz emphasized that the wicked hear the sound of terror (פְחָדִים-קוֹל), Job claims that the only sounds they hear are the melodious tunes made by their lively children.\textsuperscript{895}

The significance of Job’s comments in vv. 11-12 is further grasped when interpreted in light of how Job’s friends have alluded to his personal situation throughout their speeches. In vv. 11-12, Job states that the wicked enjoy the festivities of their children singing, dancing, and playing music when, according to his friends, their wickedness should have made this felicity impossible.

\textsuperscript{889} This point is further argued below in section 6.3.3.3. Cf. Prov 20:7 for the conventional wisdom regarding the descendants of the righteous experiencing blessings, and Ps 37:28 for a traditional saying concerning the obliteration of the children of the wicked. Hartley, \textit{Job}, 314; Wilson, \textit{Job}, 226.

\textsuperscript{890} The verb נָשָא is used elliptically here for נָשָא קֹל “to raise a sound/voice” indicating singing. Psalm 81:3 provides a clear parallel to this usage through the phrase נִשְׂא-קֹל “life up (i.e., sing) a song.” Hakham, \textit{Job}, 165; Seow, \textit{Job 1-21}, 882.

\textsuperscript{891} The תֹף is evidently an instrument struck with the hand and associated with dancing. See, for example, how Miriam and other women went out and danced with בָּתֵּפֶים וּבִמְחֹלֹת in Exod 15:20 (\textit{BDB}, 1074). As opposed to reading בָתֵּפֶים, several of the versions suggest reading כִנּוֹר, which garners the support of several commentators. See Dhorme, \textit{Job}, 312; Pope, \textit{Job}, 158; Hartley, \textit{Job}, 312, n. 3. The difference in meaning is minor: As opposed to the raising a voice with a drum and lyre (כִנּוֹר), the phrase would suggest raising ones voice/sound as a drum and lyre (תֹף). Seow, \textit{Job 1-21}, 883.

\textsuperscript{892} Longman, \textit{Job}, 277. Similar descriptions appear elsewhere in the Bible of people using musical instruments for debauchorous festivities. See Amos 6:5, but especially Isa 5:12, where both the כִנּוֹר and תֹף are played. Pope, \textit{Job}, 158. In light of what the wicked’s rejection of God in vv. 14-15 (see discussion in section 6.3.4.1), and the fact that these instruments are used in illicit worship, perhaps Job is suggesting that the wicked participate in illegitimate cultic activity, yet remain unscathed.

\textsuperscript{893} Habel, \textit{Job}, 325, 327; Hakham, \textit{Job}, 165; Clines, \textit{Job 21-37}, 526.

\textsuperscript{894} For a discussion of masculine plural forms (e.g. שִמְחָה) used as an abstract, see Greenstein, “Invention of Language,” 340-41.

\textsuperscript{895} Habel, \textit{Job}, 325.
for them. Through Job’s comments in these verses, he reveals his perception of his friends’ allusions to his children. In the prologue, Job’s own children are portrayed as those who hold family festivities in their homes (1:4). It was precisely while Job’s family was feasting that a mighty wind struck the house of the eldest son, killing all of Job’s children (1:18-19). This is to say, it was while Job’s children were participating in the joys of the family festivities, that they were interrupted by a horrific tragedy.\footnote{Clines, \textit{Job 21-37}, 526.} Now in 21:11-12, Job illustrates the joyous festivities of the children of the wicked—free from calamity. Job’s response to his friends in 21:11-12 demonstrates that he clearly perceives that they have suggested that the death of his children was divine retribution (cf. 8:4). In response to this, Job paints the picture of the children of the wicked who live the way Job’s children lived before the supposed retribution fell upon them.

6.4.2.3 \textit{Delayed Retribution Dogma and the Role of Children—vv. 19-21}

In the dialogues, Job never contemplates the idea that his children died because of his sin. On the contrary, Job has implied that the suggestion concerning the children of the wicked eventually experiencing the consequences of their parents’ sin is problematic (see e.g. v. 11 above). Nevertheless, Job’s friends might still counter his observations concerning the prosperity of the wicked by stating, “the doctrine [of retribution] never said that it was always the wrongdoers themselves that suffered the consequences of their misdeeds; sometimes…the fathers could eat sour grapes and the teeth of the children be set on edge” (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2).\footnote{Ibid., 529. Cf. also Exod 20:5 and Deut 5:9 which suggest that children could be punished for their parents’ wrongdoings. These verses are balanced in Deut 24:16, which states that all are to be put to death for their own sin and not the sin of others.}

Job’s friends have certainly been leaning toward this line of reasoning. The idea that the conduct of the wicked affects subsequent generations is mentioned by Eliphaz (4:10-11;\footnote{See section 2.2.} 5:4)
Bildad (18:16-17, 19), and Zophar (20:10). Without a definitive word on this loophole, Job’s friends might use it to continue to blame his wickedness for his situation, as well as the tragedy of the death of his children. Therefore, in vv. 19-21 Job determines to prove that the whole notion of retribution coming upon the children of the wicked, as opposed to the wicked themselves, inherently thwarts the legitimacy of the doctrine of retribution. Indeed, “(p)assing judgment upon fathers to their children is not just retribution in Job’s view. It has nothing to do with reaping what one sows.”

Job, then, commences this dispute with a formulated quotation in anticipation of the position that he expects his companions to take after he has made his point that the wicked prosper as opposed to suffer. Those who believe in delayed retribution would simply respond to Job’s observations that the wicked prosper by saying that God stores upon their iniquity for their children (אֱלֹה יִツְףּ לְבָנָו אוֹנו [v. 19a]). However, Job considers this to be a preposterous solution because it is an outright evasion of the inherent problem of the prosperity of the wicked in a system of just retribution. Therefore, Job expresses a desire which—were it to consistently happen—would not only settle his apprehension towards the just retribution paradigm, but would also serve as a condition that could rectify the doctrine in general. In order for the retributive dogma to be credible, God must swiftly pay back the wicked for their deeds and they must know they are receiving retribution (יְש לֵם אֵלָי וְיֵדָע [v. 19b]). Knowing they are being punished, whether for the

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899 See section 4.6.
900 See section 5.2.1.
901 Clines, Job 21-37, 518. Job’s friends have, admittedly, never explicitly made this claim. Nevertheless, as Hakham notes, Job supposes that if he were able to prove that the wicked do not suffer during their lives, his friends would then retort that their children are eventually punished. Hakham, Job, 167. See also Seow, Job 1-21, 873.
902 Wilson, Job, 232. Italics his.
903 Pope, Job, 159; Habel, Job, 328; Hakham, Job, 167.
904 Rowley, Job, 149-50; Habel, Job, 325.
905 Andersen, Job, 216.
purpose of judgment or instruction,\textsuperscript{906} is of foremost importance to Job\textsuperscript{907} being that the evildoers must see their own destruction (\textsuperscript{908}יִרְאוּ עֵינָֽו כִּיְד [v. 20a]) if they persist in their wickedness. This is in contrast to Zophar’s claim that they eye of the wicked’s former acquaintances observe their punishment (20:9).\textsuperscript{909} Job does not deny that punishment could be observable, but considers this an unsatisfactory standard for the model of consistent retribution his friends have proposed. The wicked—and not just those around them—must perceive that they are being punished by drinking in the venom\textsuperscript{910} of the Almighty ([v. 20b]). This retribution must be carried out immediately upon the evildoers if the doctrine of just retribution were to carry any weight.\textsuperscript{911}

There is another pragmatic reason as to why delayed retribution upon the children of the wicked is senseless to Job. Job has already expressed his belief that people are ignorant as to what happens to their descendants once they die (14:21). This means that Job does not believe that any suffering among the wicked’s offspring could negatively affect them in any way.\textsuperscript{913} Therefore, the wicked do not care about their children after their death, a point that Job emphasizes through

\textsuperscript{906} Wilson, Job, 232.
\textsuperscript{907} Clines, Job 21-37, 512.
\textsuperscript{908} Commentators have had difficulty determining the meaning of the hapax legomenon יִד, which has resulted in two main lines of interpretation. Some commentators maintain the MT and connect יִד to Arabic words related to חָרָם (e.g. חָרָם “war” [Lane, 2639; see Pope, Job, 160]). Among these commentators are those who relate יח with the Old South Arabic meaning of אָס “to condemn,” and hence, “condemnation, damnation.” See Rowley, Job, 150, and, Seow, Job 1-21, 887, who both appeal to A. F. L. Beeston, “Notes on Old South Arabian Lexicography VI,” Le Muséon 67 (1954): 311-22. The other primary method of discerning the meaning is through emendation of ״יִד. The most common emendation, and strongest suggestion, is to רו “his ruin, disaster” (\textsuperscript{909}BDB, 810; Dhorme, Job, 317), while others emend to י.Validate “his cup (fate)” (Hakham, Job, 167), among other suggestions. See Clines, Job 21-37, 512, for an extensive overview of opinions. The context of the verse is key to understanding the meaning of יִד, which is clearly in parallel with יִד (fate). Thus, some sort of violent calamity is likely being portrayed, which is the understanding of some of the versions (OG σφαγήν “slaughter,” Targum יִדְנָה “to break” [Jastrow, 1645]). This meaning of calamity can be understood by way of both the potential Arabic cognates of יִד as well as the suggested emendations—particularly to יִד.
\textsuperscript{909} Habel, Job, 329.
\textsuperscript{910} For the word יִד specifically used to provoke a double-entendre based upon its two-fold meaning of “anger” and “venom,” see Chaim Cohen, "Foam' in Hosea 10:7," \textit{JANES} 2 (1969): 27.
\textsuperscript{911} The image of drinking the anger of God as a form of divine wrath is found throughout the Hebrew Bible and beyond into the world of Second Temple Judaism. Cf. Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15; Rev 16:19.
\textsuperscript{912} Andersen, Job, 216. Job’s insistence upon the immediacy of retribution upon the wicked corresponds to Qohelet’s assertion that people must experience their own punishment swiftly or evil will abound (Eccl 8:11).
\textsuperscript{913} Rowley, Job, 149-50; Hakham, Job, 167; Seow, Job 1-21, 873.
a rhetorical question in v. 21, “What is his interest in his home after him (i.e. his death) [when] the number of his months are cut off?” (The) punishment of the children of the wicked, as if it were the punishment of the wicked, is no punishment at all. Retribution must come upon the person who actually commits an offense or it cannot be reckoned as reprisal to the sinner. Job is determined to communicate that the “grave problem with the theory of delayed retribution is that the misfortune that is to befall a wicked person’s children after his death cannot affect the sinner himself. In fact, after he has died, he no longer has any personal interest in the fate of his household.”

Excursus: Blessings for the Mindful of Cult in “The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta”

Up to this point in chapter 21, Job has addressed the issues relating to the thriving of the wicked (e.g., their growing old in peace), and the well-being of their children. Job has pointed to these blessings upon the wicked in order to demonstrate that human observation runs contrary to the doctrine of just retribution as the ordained method of analyzing whether or not one is mindful of God’s ways. In addition to this, it has become clear in this speech that Job is responding to his friends’ insinuations regarding his former lifestyle as depicted in the prologue.

Correspondingly, the early 2nd millennium BCE Sumerian wisdom composition The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta also refers to the blessings of living a flourishing, thriving life and the well-being of children. This composition discusses these themes in relationship to one’s piety and observance of religious rituals. According to Ur-Ninurta, the person who fears the divine and

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914 This is understood in light of the Akkadian word arki plus a suffix indicating someone’s death (CAD, II A/II, 279-80). Seow, Job 1-21, 888.
915 In light of how the phrase נְסֵפָר שָׁנִים is used in 14:5, as well as the similar phrase נְסֵפָר שָׁנִים in 15:20, it is apparent that נְסֵפָר שָׁנִים in this verse refers to one’s lifespan. Rowley, Job, 150; Clines, Job 21-37, 529-30.
916 The verb נָטַשׁ is in the plural because it is attracted to the genitive “months” and not the nomen regens. Hartley, Job, 316, n. 4. See also the phrase נָטַשׁ מִסְפָּר שָׁנִים נְצָפִין in 38:21 as well as a similar occurrence in נָטַשׁ מִסְפָּר שָׁנִים וְנֵצֶּפֶת in GKC §146a.
917 Hartley, Job, 317. See also Andersen, Job, 216; Hartley, Job, 317; Longman, Job, 278.
918 Hereafter referred to as Ur-Ninurta.
respects his god’s ways receives the aforementioned blessings, whereas the impious person is deprived of them. Hence, receiving prosperity in life is contingent upon religious observation.\(^{919}\)

The following excerpt of *Ur-Ninurta* demonstrates these facts:

He who knows how to respect religious affairs, who voluntarily pleases his god, who performs the rites, to whom the name of his god is dear, who keeps away from swearing, he goes straight to the place of worship, what he has lost is restored to him.

Days will be added to his days.

Years will be plenty in addition to the years he already has.

His descendants will experience good health…

…But the man who does not fear the affairs of his god…

…to whom prayers are not dear,

…to whom the name of his god is not dear, The days when he lives out will not be right.

His descendants will not experience good health.

*The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta*, Lines 19-28, 30-31, 32a-34\(^{920}\)

The thematic parallels between these Job and *Ur-Ninurta* are immediately conspicuous, placing the Job among comparable ancient Near Eastern literature which expresses concern for the same issues. In *Ur-Ninurta* the person who honors their god, performs their cultic duties, and strives to live an honorable lifestyle, will live a long life. Not only do the devout personally benefit from their reverence, but their children also experience good health. This is not so for the inattentive to the religious cult. Those who do not honor their god experience troubled and shorter lives than the pious, while their children’s health declines.

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\(^{919}\) Alster importantly notes that there may have been ulterior motives to the writing of a composition intended to encourage religious obedience. “The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta...are better designed to teach the subjects to obey their sovereign. Religious submissiveness was obviously seen as serving the interests of the ruler.” Alster, *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer*, 221-24, quotation taken from p. 224.

\(^{920}\) Ibid., 228-30.
Job’s friends have repeatedly cautioned him through the same types of warnings, and strived to encourage Job through presenting similar blessings those enumerated in Ur-Ninurta. In the first round of speeches, Eliphaz promises Job a secure tent, a multitude of children, and a vigorous life upon recognizing the discipline of God (5:17, 24-26). Bildad insists that Job’s children must have sinned and therefore died (8:4), but that God would restore Job to his righteous abode, given a prosperous future filled with joy and laughter if he refrains from falling into impiety (8:6-7, 20-21). Zophar similarly focuses on the good fortune that would come upon Job if he would just put away his sin and turn back to God (11:14-19). These warnings of potential irreverence to God turn into accusations during the second round of speeches, where Job’s friends strive to name his iniquity (15:5), suggest that he will prematurely die (15:22; 18:5-6, 18; 20:11, 22-26), blaming his wrongdoing for his lack of children (15:34; 18:17, 19).

Despite Job’s friends’ injunction to honor God, they do not overtly call him to be mindful of the religious cult as in Ur-Ninurta (e.g., performing rites and going to the place of worship). Though the cultic aspect is missing in the dialogues of Job, it is mentioned in the prologue, where Job is depicted as interceding on behalf of his children by offering precautionary sacrifices for them, in case they were to sin (1:5). Thus, Job is a virtuous family priest responsible in cultic duties, yet—according to the just retribution paradigm of Job’s companions and Ur-Ninurta—he suffers the curses of a man who does not fear God and does not strive to keep cultic practice. His days are seemingly drawing to an early end because of his infirmities. His descendants are dead. Job suffers despite meeting the criteria for rewards, not just in the Bible, but also in the ancient Near East in general. Job and God are the only ones cognizant of this fact.

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921 See discussion of these verses from the first round of speeches in section 2.7.
922 See discussions of the verses from the second round of speeches in chapters 3-5.
6.4.3 Financial Prosperity of the Wicked—vv. 10, 16

Even though Job suggests that any exception to the law of retribution means that it cannot be categorically applied, his argument is based upon more than one inconsistency. Job’s contention is that the opposite of the law of retribution is in force most of the time—namely, that the wicked regularly obtain unwarranted rewards—which is a contention that he establishes upon more than simply his observation that the wicked live pleasant lives. There are plenty of exceptions to his friends’ retribution dogma—none of which is more evident than the economic prosperity of the wicked.

6.4.3.1 Zoological Prosperity—v. 10

During Eliphaz’s first dialogue, he momentarily broaches the end of the financial prosperity of evildoers stating that their harvest (וֹקְצִיר), as well as their wealth (חֵי לָׁם), are consumed by others. Eliphaz once again refers to the financial prosperity of the wicked in 15:29, where he slightly changes his focus from the property of the wicked being confiscated, to the temporal nature of their prosperity. The ephemerality of the riches of the wicked is taken up once again and expounded upon by Zophar in 20:15-18, in which the wicked are depicted as, not only prohibited from enjoying their wealth, but also suffering violent retribution for having illicitly attained their riches and thus, being forced to surrender them. Despite their slightly varying depictions of the fate of the wealth of the both Eliphaz and Zophar share the common belief that the wealth of the wicked is so ephemeral that it cannot be utilized for their personal betterment.

Job takes issue with his companions’ view of the ephemerality of the financial prosperity of the wicked and directly confronts the idea that their riches are taken away as reprisal for their

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923 Hartley, Job, 316.
924 See discussion in section 3.4.2.
925 See discussion in section 5.2.2.
926 Hartley, Job, 313.
evildoing. Job provides an example relating to zoological prosperity in order to validate his point that the assets of the wicked do not diminish, but rather, abound. According to Job, simple observation of the cattle of the wicked reveals the potency of their bulls (שֶׁרֶץ וְלֹא יִגְעִל), as well as the fertility of their cows (תְפִלֵּט פָּרָה וְלֹא תְשֻׁל). By mentioning the productive cattle of the wicked, Job states the express opposite of what his companions suggested concerning the fleeting nature of their wealth. Possessing fertile livestock is, in fact, a shrewd way of maintaining prosperity throughout generations in that cattle have the ability to continually reproduce valuable commodities which are beneficial for humans.

Despite Job’s companions’ silence with regard to the fecundity of animals as a sign of divine pleasure, other sections of the Bible make clear that this idea was commonplace in Israel’s history. For instance, in Deut 28:4 God pronounces a blessing upon the offspring of the livestock of those who are obedient to God’s commandments (ברוח פֶּרֶץ...בְּהֶמֶתךָ אֲלָפֶיךָ), which is subsequently echoed in v. 11 (הַחֲלַקְתָּךְ לְטוֹבָה בִּפְרִי...בְּהֶמֶתךָ). Conversely, God utters a curse upon the offspring of the livestock of those who do not keep his commandments in 28:18 (אָֽרָרְךָ פֶּרֶץ...בְּהֶמֶתךָ). Another example can be found in Psalm 144, which is a

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927 The verb only appears in the piel one other time in the Bible (1 Kgs 6:21), but the meaning in this context is unique in Biblical Hebrew. It is apparent in the context that it is speaking of the good welfare of the cattle, and the mention of the happiness of the wicked’s household makes the fecundity of cattle the most reasonable meaning. Hakham notes that this term is normal in Mishnaic Hebrew where it is intransitively inclined for the female (e.g. the derivative adjective in Mas'ed Beham 3, 8 in Mishnaic Hebrew and elsewhere [see, BDB, 1125]). This is also the same sense of זכר in the pael in Aramaic (Jastrow, 1039). Interestingly in this passage, זכר is conjugated in the masculine—indicating the agent of impregnation. Perhaps the Hebrew usage can be gleaned from the Targum, which translates זכר as "to burst forth" (Jastrow, 868) with, perhaps, semen being understood. In this manner, זכר in the piel can be utilized for a bull as it relates to causing conception through emitting semen. Dhorme, Job, 3; Hakham, Job, 164.

928 This is the only place in the Bible where the verb "to abhor, loathe" (HALOT, 1:199, BDB, 171) appears in the hiphil. The context does not lend itself to the traditional Biblical Hebrew definition because the passage at hand deals with the robustness of the wicked’s bulls. Since the verb זכר means “to make dirty, spoil, be spoiled” in multiple Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic paradigms (HALOT, 1:199, Jastrow, 261), it is plausible that this could be referring to the spoiling of the bulls’ semen—or perhaps—making a reference to semen that cannot impregnate. Hakham, Job, 164; Seow, Job 1-21, 882.

929 Both the bull (שֶׁרֶץ) and cow (פָּרָה) in this verse should be viewed as collective terms referring to cattle in general. The third person masculine singular possessive suffix (וָ) should also be viewed as a collective term referring to the possessions of the wicked—as it has been already used in the book of Job (e.g. 18:5-6, see also 21:19-21). Andersen, Job, 215; Hakham, Job, 164; Seow, Job 1-21, 881.
composition in which the psalmist pleads for God’s deliverance from his enemies. Upon recounting the blessings conferred to those who experience God’s salvation, the psalmist states, “our flocks [will be] thousands upon thousands in our fields (וּצֹאֲנוּ מֶלֶאכְתֵנוּ מִרְּפָאֵתָה וּמְרֻבָּבוֹת בְּחַוְצֵינוּ [v. 13]).

Lastly, Gen 30:29-30 portrays Jacob reminding Laban that his possessions, including Laban’s flocks, had multiplied only because God was with him (בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְךָ יְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה). These examples demonstrate that fertility among one’s cattle was indeed regarded as a mark of divine blessing.

The wisdom tradition agrees with the aforementioned observations indicating that prosperity is bestowed to the righteous (e.g., זֹרֵע שֶכֶר אֱמֶת [Prov 11:18]). It is precisely because of how clearly the Pentateuch, wisdom tradition, and the Psalms ascribe financial prosperity—particularly cattle—to those who honor God, that it is possible to see how Job uses this example to communicate his understanding of the severity of his companions’ accusations. Job, at one point, experienced the type of prosperity that, he contends, predominantly belongs to the wicked. The prologue tells of Job having formerly possessed an enormous quantity of livestock (1:3). Since Job’s friends claim that the wicked’s goods are short-lived, it would be expected that an evildoer—especially one with the quantity of possessions Job once had—would have eventually been dispossessed of them. In this case, Job, knowing full well that his friends perceive the dispossession of his cattle as a sign of wickedness, mentions the fact that the wicked are those whose wealth is perpetuated by exceptionally reproductive cattle. Since basic observation demonstrates that the wicked are able to persevere in the tremendous prosperity that Job possessed prior to his trials, it must then be possible for Job to experience undeserved horrific affliction.

6.4.3.2 The Prosperity of the Wicked in the Babylonian Theodicy

930 Andersen, Job, 215; Clines, Job 21-37, 526.
931 Rowley, Job; 148, Habel, Job, 327.
The complaint of the prosperity of the wicked is also attested in the *Theodicy* and, similar to *Ur-Ninurta*, one’s abundance is related to the cultic sphere.\(^{932}\) In his protest the sufferer declares:

| illakû uruḫ dumqi la mušteʾu ili iltapni ša ilti illiligimiya ʾem ili ashur illabān appi u tēmīqi ʾesēʾe ili ilku ša la nēmeli ašat abšānu iltašan ilu kī mašrē katūta ilannī kuṣṣudu pananni lilli iltaqū ḫarḥarā ṣṭā ṣṭāšpihil | Those who do not seek the god go the way of success,\(^{933}\) while someone who thinks of the goddess could become poor and impoverished. In my youth, I searched for the reasoning of the god, with the mark of respect and benedictions, I sought the goddess. I bear a yoke as a corvée which brought no gain but the god has imposed on me poverty instead of riches. A cripple went up above me; a fool moved forward away from me; while rascals have moved up in society, I have fallen so low in society. *Babylonian Theodicy*, lines 70-77\(^{934}\) |

Similar to Job, the sufferer in the *Babylonian Theodicy* observes that those who do not honor God experience good fortune. More so than Job, however, the sufferer overtly interjects his personal grievance into the criticism of the prosperity of the wicked, comparing his piety to the impiety of the godless, and suggesting that he should rightfully have been the recipient of the prosperity. The reason why the sufferer expects to obtain blessing is because of his cultic observation. Job, on the other hand, is more concerned about pointing to the prosperity of the wicked as an inconsistency in his friends’ paradigm and, hence, its irrelevance to his situation.

Regardless of this variation, there are several notable commonalities when reading the sufferer’s complaint alongside of Job and in light of all that Job’s friends have had to say about

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\(^{932}\) This, according to Greenstein, is “in contrast to the interpersonal evil that is contemplated by Jeremiah and Job.” Greenstein, "Jeremiah as an Inspiration," 103-04, n. 10.

\(^{933}\) The Akkadian *dumqi* likely signifies financial well-being in this context (*CAD, D*, 180-81, especially entry 3). Lambert’s translation of “prosperity” in *BWL, 77*, more properly communicates this concept.

the elimination of the wicked’s prosperity. Like Job, the sufferer of the *Babylonian Theodicy* communicates from experience that which proves to be true—namely, those that are impious experience abundance—even though this fact contradicts the prominent theological view of his companion. The sufferer additionally portrays the impious’ prosperity as genuinely authentic and suggests that the wealth of the wicked can indeed be used for their betterment as Job does in v. 10. The sufferer does not indicate that the wicked’s affluence is ephemeral or that it is confiscated by a god. Rather, as in Job, the companion suggests violent retribution for the prosperous villain. Accordingly, the sufferer in the *Babylonian Theodicy* and Job draw the same aggregate conclusion through their experiences. People’s deeds—even their cultic acts—are not necessarily related to the outcome of their lives. Barring the differences with respect to the cult in the *Babylonian Theodicy*, the sufferer’s comments serve as a challenge even to the retributive theology of Job’s friends by relating his experience in which it is inapplicable.

6.4.3.3 Job’s Interlude: “Their Prosperity is not in their Own Hands…”—v. 16

Job has been curiously silent regarding the loss of his property. Job is nowhere portrayed as bewailing his former resources presented in the prologue and has appeared significantly less worried about the return of his fortune than the scandal of divine injustice. Nevertheless, Job’s observation concerning the financial prosperity of the wicked indicates that their prosperity, and its theological implications, weigh heavily on the mind of Job. Job ponders the significance of losing his family, his health, his children, and his wealth, while observing the wicked continuing

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935 See lines 60-65 for the retributive justice view of the sufferer’s companion.
936 “The villain who has no god may gain possession, but a killer with his weapon pursues him.” Oshima, *The Babylonian Theodicy*, 24.
937 Seow, *Job 1-21*, 877. The sufferer and his friend also discuss this theme in lines 50-64 of this composition—a portion of which is treated above in section 2.2.4. Job advances this theme in vv. 23-26 which are elaborated upon below in section 6.3.4.2.
to financially prosper. These realities force the question: Is Job willing to consider the ways of the wicked as a way of regaining the comforts of his former lifestyle?

The expected negative answer to this question is provided in v. 16. In a personal parenthetical statement\(^938\) that lucidly demonstrates Job’s integrity, Job declares that he is resolute in staying aloof from the counsel of the wicked (ָׁא יִתְנָּה עֲצַּת רֶשֶׁע). This is indeed, “the pious protest of someone who was scandalized at the idea that the attitude of the wicked might be condoned.”\(^940\) Thus, Job wholeheartedly rejects the counsel of the wicked and suggests that, because of this, he cannot be unquestionably identified with them on account of his circumstances.\(^941\) The counsel of the wicked is so appalling to Job that any association with them is shunned—regardless of their riches.\(^942\) Yet, Job’s affinity with the wicked is what Job’s friends have squarely implied throughout the dialogues.\(^943\)

On the one hand, Job unequivocally rejects any affiliation with the wicked, seemingly identifying with a God who abhors evildoing, while, on the other hand, he blames God for the prosperity of the wicked. Job’s claim in v. 16 is that the prosperity of the wicked is not their own doing. God is responsible for the riches of evildoers who have done nothing to earn or deserve them. In this sense, the prosperity of the wicked is not in their hands ( למעשה טובם), but rather

\(^{938}\) Habel, Job, 328; Hartley, Job, 315.

\(^{939}\) Job has already made reference to the phrase עֲצַּת רֶשֶׁע in 10:3. See section 2.5, where I point out that Job accuses God of contradicting traditional Israelite wisdom in responding favorably to the counsel of the wicked (עיין עֲצַּת רֶשֶׁע).

\(^{940}\) Pope, Job, 159.

\(^{941}\) Hartley, Job, 315.

\(^{942}\) Wilson, Job, 228.

\(^{943}\) Habel, Job, 328.

\(^{944}\) Habel, following Gordis, suggests that this verse is a continuation of the preceding quotation of the wicked in vv. 14-15 (see treatment of this verse below) and renders the phrase, “Our happiness is certainly not his doing!” This translation evidently comes from an original reading of וַיְאַבֵּדְךָ יְהוָה תַּחַת. Habel makes this suggestion based upon what he considers to be an awkward question by Job at this point and suggests that his translation provides a fitting climax for the words of the wicked. Ibid., 322. Though it is understandable why one might consider Job’s question out of place, Habel’s reading is difficult to justify in that it requires emendation of an intelligible text without significant evidence from the versions. It seems that it is more reasonable to understand v. 16a as part of Job’s personal parenthetical statement which suggests that, even though God is liable for the riches of the wicked, Job wants nothing to do with their lifestyle.
in the hands of God. God could, at any moment, seize their prosperity just as God dispossessed Job. The simple fact that God could take the prosperity from a person of integrity like Job and give it to the wicked—or even, vice versa—is the epitome of an unjust system. Therefore, the prosperity of the wicked is proof that God is not particularly interested in creating an equitable system of justice according to Job. The issue is not just that God allows the wicked to prosper, but for Job the major problem is that the “God who allows the wicked to prosper is inevitably a God who allows the righteous to suffer.”

6.4.4 An Alienated Life to an Arbitrary Death—vv. 14-15, 22-26

One of the most inequitable aspects of how God deals with people’s fates is that those who overtly reject God and those who honor God end up, at the end of their lives, simply dying. After all Job’s friends have said about calamity taking the wicked down to the grave in a premature death, Job has observed that all people, especially those who overtly reject God and decide to live alienated from God, die in the same manner. Job observes injustice not only in the fact that the wicked prosper, but no less the fact that the righteous suffer and there is no discernible distinction between the two people groups even through their ultimate common demise. In vv. 14-15 Job provides an illustration of those who openly reject and prefer to be remote from God, and in vv. 22-26 he describes how all people, those who repudiate God as well as those who honor God, meet the same fate.

6.4.4.1 The Spurning of God—vv. 14-15

What Job communicates in v. 14 is the ultimate manifestation of hubris by the wicked. In this verse Job does not hypothesize based upon external observation, but rather states the apparent
disposition of the wicked’s heart before God.949 Quite bluntly evildoers say to God, “Depart from us! We do not desire knowledge of your ways!” These brazen words by the impious depict God approaching them, offering to direct them in God’s ways. The wicked’s response is not just to spurn the God they know exists, but also to blatantly disregard the ways of God which bring about blessing, resulting in them being the epitome of all evildoers.950

This rejection of the knowledge (דעת) and the ways (דרכים) of God by the wicked in v. 14 is in clear contrast to how the Bible depicts the pious. According to Ps 25:4, the person who trusts in God, implores God saying, “Show me your ways (דרכים), [and] teach me your paths (אורחותי)”951 Another psalm states that the path of God leads to life and therefore, petitions God to show him the way (הדרעתו ארצה רימ) [16:11].951 On the contrary, revelation of God’s ways is not granted to people who are under the influence of wickedness, even if they were to implore God for knowledge. As is recorded in Isaiah, God mentions purported seekers, saying, “They desire knowledge of my ways (דעת דרכי יִֽהְוֶה) as [if they were] a people who practice righteousness” (58:2). That is to say, people who practice righteousness truly yearn for the ways of God. Nevertheless, Isaiah reveals that people are hindered from the knowledge of God’s ways they claim they desire because they are caught in the bonds of wickedness (58:6)).952

Unlike those whom Isaiah depicts, the wicked whom Job mentions in v. 15 do not desire to know anything about God. Job alludes to blasphemers who ridicule the idea of serving God because it is worthless to them. The impious mock God in posing the rhetorical question, “Who is the Almighty that we [should] serve him?” 953

949 Wilson, Job, 226.
950 Hakham, Job, 166.
951 Pope, Job, 158.
952 Clines, Job 21-37, 527.
953 The conjunction כִי used after a question commonly expresses a result and is, therefore, translated “that.” See e.g., Ps 8:5 מָהֵן כִי-תִזְכִּרֵנֵו. 169e.
954 Clines, Job 21-37, 527.
mocking the idea of serving God is antithetical to the godly person of Prov 30:9, who strives to avoid sin so as not to slip into impiety, forgetting his God, and ask, "Who is the Lord?" (מִי יְהוָּה).

Furthermore, the derisive question of the wicked in v. 15 parallels other biblical depictions of the impious arrogantly feigning no need for God. Several psalms depict the hubris of the wicked and their lack of interest in God as well. Psalm 73:11 in particular provides a glimpse into the mind of the wicked and their disbelief in the omniscience of God. The wicked, therefore, incredulously ask, "How will God know? Does the most high have knowledge?" (אֵיכָה יָד ע-אֵל וְיֵש דֵעָה בְעֶלְיוֹן).

Other psalms depict the wicked’s disregard for God through their foolhardily denying God’s existence in order to indulge in sin and avoid accountability. Notably Pss 14:1 and 53:2 both depict the condition of the foolish person’s heart in their claim that there is no God (סֶפֶר נְבָל בְלִב אֵין אֱלֹהִים).

Job does not, however, depict the evildoer claiming there is no God. Job’s accusation presents a more abject form of impiety than simply denying God’s existence. The wicked of v. 15 know God exists but intentionally refrain from associating with God because it is not beneficial for them. Therefore, the impious spurn God, finding no need to encounter God through prayer (דְתִפְגּ ע-בִי). The wicked willfully renounce God, indifferent to the consequences of their actions. There is a God according to the wicked, but God is too limited in power to make piety worthwhile or to hold them accountable for their actions.

6.4.4.2 All Meet the Same Fate: A Case Study on Death as the Common Fate—vv. 22-26

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955 Seow, Job 1-21, 872.
956 Clines, Job 21-37, 520.
957 מ ה is understood in this context to essentially mean “who” as it is also used in the phrase יִאֶמֶר כִּי מָה וְיֹאמֶר חֲזָּה ע בְדְךָ ה כֶלֶב (2 Kgs 8:13). Ibid., 527.
958 The verb תִפְגּ ע commonly means “to meet, encounter” (BDB, 803). However, it is apparently being used here to indicate “to meet with a request, to entreat” with the preposition ב as in the clause א ל-תִפְגּ ע-בִי (God speaking) in Jer 7:16, and the comparable phrase א ל-תִפְגְּעִי-בִי in Ruth 1:16 (Ruth entreating Naomi). Rowley, Job, 148; Hakham, Job, 166; Hartley, Job, 315, n. 13; Clines, Job 1-21, 509; Seow, Job 1-21, 884.
959 Hakham, Job, 166.
The arrogance of the impious is picked up once again in v. 22 through the posing of another rhetorical question, “Can anyone teach God knowledge?” (לָמֵ֓ל יֶלֶל בְּמִדְּנָ֑ה) The expected answer is certainly “no,” as it would be in any conventional biblical text related to whether any human can teach God anything. This question should be understood as an accusation in light of Job’s portrayal of the wicked in vv. 14. The wicked do not only reject the knowledge (דָּעַה) of God’s ways, but they even presume to have knowledge that God does not possess.

The question posed in v. 14, however, is not a general accusation against the wicked. Rather, Job is homing in on that attitude of his friends in their aggressive campaign for his compliance with their doctrine of retribution. As a result of their zealous faith in their doctrine, Job notes that his companions have necessarily reduced God to a secondary concern, subject to their dogma. As Clines explains:

Any theology that does not take account of the facts is a form of patronizing God. For if we assume that what happens in the world is, broadly speaking, the will of God, any theological schema like the doctrine of retribution that differs from the facts makes God out to be secondary to the schema. What happens in the world must be, according to Job, more or less what God intends, and anyone who pretends to have a better way of running the world is setting out to “teach God knowledge.”

Despite the fact that Job is unaware of exactly why such drastic misfortune has fallen upon him, he is not quite ready to stop trusting in God’s sovereignty. God is the only autonomous

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960 See, for example, the similarly posed questions in Isa 40:14: וּט ו יְל מְדֵה י נוֹעָׁץ ו יְבִינֵהוּ ו יְל מְדֵהוּ בְאֹר ח מִשְפָׁ מִ - אֶת ד ע ת וְדֶרֶךְ תְבוּנוֹת יוֹדִיעֶנּוּ. Hartley, Job, 318, n. 5.
961 Habel rightly notes that we should take “this verse as a caustic comment directed to the friends in similar vein to vs. 27 and 34.” Habel, Job, 323.
962 Seow, Job 1-21, 874.
963 Clines, Job 21-37, 530. Dhorme concurs that Job’s friends, “incorrigibly claim to instruct everyone and even attempt to impose on God Himself the rigour of their doctrine.” Dhorme, Job, 318. See also Hakham, Job, 167.
who has the power to judge (יִשְפוֹט רָׁמִים וְהוּא). That is to say, regardless of how unjust Job considers God and God’s system of retribution to be, the wicked ultimately prosper because God permits them to prosper. Job considers any other response to his observations of human fate as an attempt to instruct God on how to operate the divine plan. In this manner, Job’s friends are rejecting God’s ways which are manifested in human experience because of their strict adherence to the retribution doctrine. They are asking God to leave them alone because they would rather follow their own theological scheme than recognize the ways of God that do not fit their scheme (cf. v. 14). This a characteristic that Job presents as the essence of wickedness.

The location of v. 22 in this speech is interesting and has been questioned by some commentators. Nevertheless, the subtle introduction of Job’s friends into the conversation at this juncture by way of allusion to their dogma is Job’s way of implying that they in fact might be the guilty party in the conversation. Considering the fact that Job’s friends have harped on the idea that death is the punishment of the wicked, Job accuses his persistent friends of actually being

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964 Simply because Job is willing to concede that God is sovereign does not mean that he is quite willing to admit that God is just. Job has expressed deep confusion with regard to his personal situation and can only conclude up to this point of the composition that God is arbitrary and unfair. See the discussion in section 2.4.5, where Job raises his complaint concerning the integrity of God’s judgments.

965 The conjunction ו presents a circumstantial clause which provides further information on the former clause. In this case the circumstantial clause expresses the antithesis of that which was just mentioned. This is to say—God is indeed the judge and no one can teach God anything. GKC §142d; Clines, Job 21-37, 513; Seow, Job 1-21, 888. As Dhorme states, “Does man teach God knowledge?” The 2nd [line] shows the absurdity of such a pretention.” Dhorme, Job, 318.

966 There is some discussion with regard to what the word רָׁמִים means in this verse. Most commentators understand this word to refer to angels or heavenly beings as a masculine plural participle being used substantively (cf. 2 Sam 22:28)—perhaps making an allusion to the oft-mentioned heavenly beings in Job (cf. 5:1; 16:19). Dhorme, Job, 318; Pope, Job, 160; Rowley, Job, 150; Hartley, Job, 317, n. 1; Clines, Job 21-37, 513. An interesting variant reading is from the OG which posits φόνων and suggests that God will judge the “murderers.” Nevertheless, this reading is likely to have arisen from misreading an original γ for a ה and reading סנה (see entry in BDB, 196.2.e). Seow, Job 1-21, 888. Other commentators suggest that רָׁמִים indicates from where God judges—namely, “in the heights/from on high” and coinciding with the dwelling place of God elsewhere in Job (cf. 22:12; 25:2). Tur-Sinai, Job, 330; Hakham, Job, 167. The language indeed seems to suggest that God judges from a remote place, on high, from which what happens to humans is not much noticed. Cf. 3:23 and Eliphaz’s paraphrase in 22:12-14.

967 Clines, Job 21-37, 530.

968 For example, Pope states that this verse “seems more likely that it is misplaced from one of the discourses of the friends, or that one scandalized scribe has added it as a marginal protest against Job’s blasphemous accusations against God.” Pope, Job, 160. See also comment in Hartley, Job, 318, n. 5.
more damnable than he because of their assault on divine sovereignty. Then in vv. 23-26 Job strives to demonstrate that death is not a dependable sign of divine punishment for a wicked life because everyone dies. Job’s views here are not unfamiliar since he essentially expressed similar thoughts in 9:22-23, claiming that God destroys the wicked and the righteous together. Now Job reiterates his opinion in an expanded sequel version of the theology with the intent of demonstrating that “(i)n life no moral differences explain [people’s] diversity of misfortune; in death as little do they explain their common fate.” This corresponds to the sentiment of Qohelet in articulating the impossibility of determining one’s level of righteousness using death as a criterion:

| Everything is the same for everyone. One fate for the righteous and for the wicked—for the good and the pure, as well as for the unclean, for the one who sacrifice and for the one who does not, for the good person and for the sinner, the one who swears just as the one fears a vow. |
| Qohelet 9:2 |

Job’s point is not to present another futile generalization indicating that all of the righteous always suffer while the wicked always prosper. This would be a generic formula no better than that which his friends have presented. Job rather, like Qohelet, contends that life’s circumstances are too complicated to provide a clear pattern that discloses one’s character. The last word belongs to death, which befalls everyone. The fact that Job’s friends are alive while he appears

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971 Rowley cogently states, “Job here is not arguing that the wicked always prosper and the good are always unfortunate, but that merit and experience are not directly matched.” Ibid.
972 Andersen, *Job*, 216.
to be dying does not inherently absolve them of any wickedness. Therefore, they and not he, should beware of being so presumptuous so as to advise God with regard to how divine justice must be administered.

As Job ventures into his case study, he presents characteristics of both a prosperous and a destitute person who eventually die. It is evident through Job’s language that he once again makes allusions to his friends’ warnings to him throughout their discourses in order to invalidate their claims. Initially in v. 23 Job states that the fortunate man dies full of vigor (athonemah b’etsem 973 תֻמו). It appears as though Job is alluding to Zophar’s recent statement in which he describes the wicked as having bones filled with youthful vigor (etzemot hayyim shel zevakah [20:11]). 974 Despite Job never explicitly mentioning the wicked or the righteous in vv. 23-26, his rhetorical connection to Zophar’s statement suggests that the prosperous person Job portrays is similar to the wicked person Zophar describes. Job continues to say that this prosperous wicked person dies being wholly at ease, in a peaceful state (chilchulo shel zevakah 975 שליה). As Job continues to describe the prosperous man in v. 24, he relates that his body is in good physical health (Job is alluding to a 976 ). Once again, it appears as though 976 בֶעֲטִינָׁי כֻּלוֹ שָׁלֵי כְאָנָן means "in his vigor."
wicked person because the mention of the man’s members being filled with חָׁלָׁב brings to mind Eliphaz’s depiction of a wicked “fat person” (בַּעֲטׅין כִּשָׁה [15:27]). Eliphaz claimed that these “overweight” wicked would pass into poverty and ultimately die because of their impiety. Job on the other hand depicts the wicked as robust, and strong (וּמֹח ע צְמוֹתָׁיו יְשֻקֶה 7:11), in light of his own emaciation. Through the usage of the term ע צְמוֹתָׁיו in v. 24, Job is repeating Zophar’s allusion to the misfortune of the wicked (20:11). Job does not need to communicate overtly that he is depicting another representation of the prosperity of the wicked person in this section. He simply makes allusions to his companions’ depictions of the wicked and lets them speak for themselves.

Job also has no need to communicate overtly in this section that, when referring to the destitute person, he alludes to his own personal circumstances. Job states that the destitute man dies in bitterness of soul (וְזֶה יָׁמוּת בְנֶפֶש מָׁרָּה 7:11), which is a clear allusion to the condition in which he repeatedly depicts himself. For instance, in 3:20 in Job includes himself among the מָרֵי נָפֶש, in 7:11 Job prays in the bitterness of his soul (בְמ ר נ פְשִי), and in 10:1 Job speaks in the bitterness of

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while the Targum posits בַּעֲטׅין “his breasts.” Jastrow, 159-60. Habel follows the OG and suggests that the parallelism favors reading “intestines.” Habel, Job, 323. Several commentators have noted that the word עֲטׅין in Rabbinic Hebrew can refer to moist olives and have suggested that this can be a euphemism for the testicles. Gordis, Job, 233, followed by Hartley, Job, 317-18, n. 3; and, Seow, Job 1-21, 889. Ultimately, it remains unclear exactly which part of the body is intended. What is certain is that the body of the person Job depicts experiences supreme wellness which can be represented through the health of the aforementioned body parts.

One’s reading of the word חָׁלָׁב is largely contingent upon the reading of עֲטׅין. If the breasts (Targum), or testicles are intended to be communicated, then the current reading חָׁלָׁב can stand. However, if the preferred reading relates to the abdomen, then the slight emendation to חֵלָׁב “fat” is reasonable. This is how the Latin “adipe” and OG “στρατος” understood the term—but those translators too may have had difficulty understanding עֲטׅין.

977 See section 3.4.1 for full treatment of this phrase. See also the complaints of the psalmist in Ps 73:4, 7 for another example of how the fatness of the wicked can be a sign of physical well-being.

978 In light of the comparable phrase in Prov 3:8 (שָׁם וּמֹח ע צְמוֹתֶי) which in context is presented as the reward for fearing God, it is clear that moisture in the bones is a sign of health and prosperity. Pope, Job, 161; Hartley, Job, 318, n. 7. See the related words מְמֻחָיִים depicting satisfying food in Isa 25:6 (שְמָנִים מְמֻחָיִים), and מֵיחי to depict fattening sacrifices in Ps 66:15 (עֹלוֹת מֵיחִים). Seow, Job 1-21, 890.

979 Clines, Job 21-37, 531.
his soul (כפרה נפשו). Job is indeed one of the poor and deprived human beings who, despite once being wealthy, better identify with those who have never tasted goodness (ֵיה).980

Regardless of whether a person is well nourished and wicked or destitute and devout, God does not differentiate when it comes to people dying. The end of one’s life is free from moral consideration by God as it is merely the inevitable destiny of all.981 In order to vividly portray this point, Job employs a euphemism for death, stating that both the prosperous and deprived lie down in the dust in the same manner (ל-כפרה נפשו). Through Job’s allusion to “lying down in the dust,” he once again recalls Zophar’s remark in 20:11 that the wicked “lie down in the dust” at a time when they were filled with vigor (שפםםי קלארה וַלֹא עָמָו וְעִמוֹ).982 Job uses Zophar’s words against his paradigm once again and communicates that all people, not just the healthy and prosperous wicked, meet the same end. This is the end which Job shortly envisions will be his destiny (כ-כפרה נפשו [7:21])—a destiny that no other than God has brought upon him (ףלא-כפרה נפשו [10:9]). Job does not contradict the fact that the wicked die. He nevertheless, presents his observation that the righteous are just as transient as the wicked,983 and there is no method for discerning one’s piety by when and how they die.984

Job concludes his reasoning in a compelling, but grotesque manner, stating, “Worms cover all of them” (נקרת-כפרה נפשו). In this statement Job makes another overt reference to his condition.

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980 This is a distinct usage of the partitive 2 (GKC §119m) indicating that the subject would share in partaking of the goodness. This is generally recognized by commentators. Hartley, Job, 318, n. 4; Clines, Job 21-37, 514.
981 Longman, Job, 274-75.
982 The word כפרה in this context indicates that both types of people lie down without distinction as opposed to in unison. The point is not that all die at the same time, but rather that all die alike. Clines, Job 21-37, 514; Seow, Job 1-21, 890.
983 Habel, Job, 329.
984 Seow, Job 1-21, 874.
985 Hakham interestingly remarks that this statement should also be understood as Job’s protest against his friends potentially contending that people will receive their reward/recompense after death. Equality in death means equality in the afterlife according to Job. This was something that he already suggested in his opening speech—especially 3:12-19 where Job concludes that all different types of people end up in the same place of the dead. Hakham, Job, 168. See section 2.1 for a discussion of a select group of these verses.
Job had previously said that maggots clothed his body (לָּב ש בְשָׁרִי רִמָּה [7:5]). Then Job called the worm “mother,” “sister” meaning that the worm is his constant companion (קָּרָֽאָּתִי...אִמִי וְאֲחֹתִי לָרִמָּה [17:14]). Job’s impending death is not specific to him—it befalls everyone. Job is apparently ready to accept his imminent departure. He only wishes that his friends would refrain from considering the manner in which he departs as emblematic of his character.

6.4.5 The Honorable Wicked—vv. 27-33

Through Job’s references and allusions to his friends’ rhetoric up to this point in his speech, it is apparent that he has been addressing what he considers to be his companions’ errant mindset regarding his situation. However, Job does not make his intentions explicitly clear until v. 27, when he turns to his friends and states, “Indeed, I know your thoughts!” (יָדָֽעָּתִי מִחֲשְּבוֹתֵיכֶם). In this section Job once again appeals to experience as the authentic test of his companions’ allegations, which he knows to be schemes with which his friends have plotted to do him harm (מְזִימוֹת עָלָּיוֹנֶּנִי). Job’s reasoning at this point is straightforward. Job’s friends have adopted the argumentation that the wicked suffer and conclude that this is the reason for Job’s suffering. Therefore, Job deduces that they have collaborated in a hostile plot against him with the intent of convincing him of their errant theology while causing him to suffer through their ineffective counterarguments.

6.4.5.1 Sample Allegation: The Wicked Lose their Abode—v. 28

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986 Seow, Job 1-21, 874-75.
987 Clines, Job 21-37, 517.
988 The word הֵן, understood as a form of הִנֵּה, calls attention to that which Job claims to definitively know through experience and is therefore translated “indeed.” Job uses this word in a similar manner in 13:1 when communicating knowledge perceived through the senses (הֶן-כֹל רָּאֲתָה עֵינִי שָׁמְעָּה אָּזָּנִי וּתָבֶן לָה). Ibid., 514.
989 Job is speaking from cognition, which is evident in the verb יָדָֽעָּת being gapped in v. 27b. Hakham, Job, 168.
990 Ibid., 168-69; Wilson, Job, 235. Since the context suggests that Job’s friends are using their schemes against him, I supply the relative clause “with which” (וּב אֲשֶֽׁר) in the translation of this line. GKC §155k; Clines, Job 21-37, 514; Seow, Job 1-21, 890.
991 Clines, Job 21-37, 532.
992 Seow, Job 1-21, 890.
Not satisfied with simply presenting this general accusation, Job proceeds to give a specific example of the misguided thoughts of his friends by which they have attempted to harm him. At several points throughout their dialogues, Job’s friends have referred to the fate of the abode of the wicked (cf. 8:14-15; 15:34; 18:15-21; 20:26-28), ultimately concluding that the dwelling place of the unrepentant sinner is prone to destruction. In addition to this, Job’s friends have reiterated the idea that the wicked, though previously rich and powerful, lose the possessions which they likely attained through illicit means (15:27-29; 20:12-28). As the dialogues progressed, it became increasingly evident that Job’s friends began considering the destruction of his house and the abasement of his authority as evidence of his wickedness. Now in v. 28, Job reminds his friends of their concerted opinions, which have manifested themselves through what the companions continuously say regarding the fate of the house of the formerly-noble wicked. Since Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have been consistent in their claim that the house of the wicked cannot withstand divine retribution, Job efficiently summarizes their elongated treatises as rhetorical questions, hypothetically posed by his colleagues: “Where is the house of the nobleman, and where are the tents of the dwelling places of the wicked?” (וּנָדִיב בֵּית א יֵה

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993 See section 2.3.3 for discussion of the various potential meanings of the term “house” (בֵּית), which relates the physical house, one’s lineage, and perhaps even, the cosmos.
994 See sections 3.4 and 5.2, respectively.
995 See Andersen, Job, 213-14, who notes that “Job is referring to [his friends], without quoting verbatim.”
996 Job asking the location of the abode undoubtedly implies that it has disappeared as a result of divine retributive justice (cf. יִשָּׁר in 14:10; 20:7). Clines, Job 21-37, 532.
997 Whereas the word נָדִיב used elsewhere in the Bible to describe a person normally portrays someone of noble character, the context of v. 28 requires that this term be understood in an unfavorable manner. Initially, the term is in clear parallelism with the word רְשָׁעִים (Rowley, Job, 151-52), which like the נָדִיב, loses his dwelling place. Additionally, this is likely not a continuation of the common fate in death theme which was established in vv. 23-26 because the very next verse (v. 29) commences a section in which Job contends that common experience indicates that the wicked in fact receive preferential treatment in death (see below). These reasons, along with the fact that Job’s friends have repeatedly emphasized the humiliation of the affluent, leads to the conclusion that Job uses the word נָדִיב to recall his friends’ arguments of just retribution extending to all people. As Dhorme relates, “נָדִיב is used in a pejorative sense. The author has in view the man of rank who has risen by extortion and violence.” Dhorme, Job, 321.
Through these questions Job encapsulates the allegations of his friends according to which both the once-noble evildoer (i.e. Job), as well as the overtly wicked, ultimately suffer divine punishment through the disappearance of their houses, thereby denying the possibility of any exception to the law of retribution.

Yet Job does not accept his friends’ contention that there is no exception to the law of retribution. In fact, Job claims that the supposed infallibility of his friends’ just retribution doctrine is not empirically substantiated, and he therefore invokes the witness of third-party testimony, which demonstrates the antithesis of his companions’ theory. Even though Job recently contended that death serves as the event that equalizes all humans (vv. 23-26), Job reverts to the claim he made in 9:24 that the wicked actually fair better than the righteous. Explicitly contradicting what his friends have said about the horrendous downfall and death of the wicked, Job invokes the testimony of travelers in v. 29 with the intent of demonstrating that the wicked actually receive preferential treatment over the upright in their death and burial (vv. 30-33).

6.4.5.2 An Appeal to External Testimony—vv. 29-30

Throughout their speeches, Job’s friends have repeatedly invoked traditional wisdom and, through this, universal applicability of the just retribution system. Eliphaz unequivocally dismissed the idea that foreigners could contribute wisdom to the ancients with regard to this

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998 Some commentators have considered the phrase שְׁם מִשְׁכָּנָה to be redundant. Hartley (Job, 319, n.2) recommends removing it as a gloss and simply reading מִשְׁכָּנָה for the sake of syllable count as well as matching the nomen regens מִשְׁכָּנָה with the nomen rectum רְשָׁעִים. Ball claims that שְׁם might be as a result of dittography of שְׁמָה. Ball, Job, 294. However, as Dhorme points out, it is simply too convenient to eliminate שְׁמוּא. Dhorme, Job, 321-22. As Ps 132:3 demonstrates (سام וּפְנֵי בְּאֹהֶל בֵּיתִי), repetition of this nature can occur in biblical poetry. Additionally, the word שְׁמוּא might be serving as a plural of amplification which is “intended to intensify the idea of the stem.” GKC §124b, d-f. See also Clines, Job 21-37, 515. As was discussed above in section 5.2.4.3, repetition of the same concepts using similar wording in close proximity to one another is used by the poet of Job as an emphatic device.

999 Ball (Job, 294), Hakham, (Job, 169) and Hartley (Job, 320), also suggest that Job is alluding to his friends’ references to his own situation. See also Job’s self-assessment as a respected person in 29:12-25.

1000 Hartley, Job, 320.
1001 Clines, Job 21-37, 531.
1002 See section 2.4.5 for discussion of this verse in the contexts of the Bible and Job.
system (15:18-19). Zophar recently invoked the wisdom of the ancients, stating that from time immemorial people have known that the joy of the wicked is short-lived (20:4-5). Job now retorts that his friends are clearly not as knowledgeable as they consider themselves to be by depending on traditional wisdom. Determined to accentuate what he considers to be his friends’ blatant disregard for human experience, Job caustically asks them, “Have you not asked travelers? Have you not denied their testimonies?” (In ).

contempt of all of the wisdom Job’s friends claim to have gleaned from antiquity, Job admonishes them for their naïveté. Those who have not been indoctrinated by their community—those who have traveled, attained extensive life experience, and have no theological presuppositions about Job’s dire situation—would certainly inform Job’s companions that their theology does not harmonize with personal observations concerning the fate of the wicked.

This thought is carried over into the next line, in which the specific content of the testimonies of the travelers is exposed. These travelers, whose witness Job considers a better indication of reality than his companions’ theological system, observe that the wicked are not handed over to judgment as Job’s friends had maintained (cf. 15:23; 18:20; 20:28). Rather, the

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1003 Hartley, Job, 321.
1004 Habel, Job, 330.
1005 For an explanation of the peculiar vowel pointing (i.e., a sere the place of an expected patach), which bears no significance upon the meaning of the word, see GKC §44d, 64f, and Joüon §42d.
1006 Despite the word אוֹת normally meaning “sign” (BDB, 16), it can also take on the meaning “testimony,” as is particularly noted in Isa 19:20 where אוֹת is coupled with עֵד. Seow, Job 1-21, 891.
1007 The verb נֵּר I in the piel means “to regard, recognize” (BDB, 648) which Clines translates as “acknowledge” and suggests is a fine parallel for אוֹת in the previous line. Clines, Job 21-37, 515. See also Dhorme, Job, 322. This is reasonable, but may not adequately reflect how displeased Job is with his friends’ claim to knowledge through tradition. Job is not simply asking his friends if they are willing to acknowledge that there are other well-traveled people who hold different beliefs from them. Rather, Job is claiming that his friends explicitly deny the truths that are acquired through experiences of people outside of their community. Therefore, it is more suitable to understand אוֹת as derived from נֵּר II in the piel, “to deny” (BDB, 1125), which coincides with a meaning of the related Arabic root كَنَّر “to deny” (Lane, 2849, def. 4). See also Hartley, Job, 319, n. 3.
1008 Andersen, Job, 217.
1009 Cf. Lam 1:12; 2:15; Ps 80:13. Clines, Job 21-37, 533; Seow, Job 1-21, 890-91.
1010 Rowley, Job, 152; Wilson, Job, 236.
1011 Hakham, Job, 169; Seow, Job 1-21, 891.
impious are spared calamity on the day when divinely appointed wrath is manifested (יִשָּׁתָּה לְיֹם עֲבָׁרוֹת כִּי לְיוֹם) 
preferential treatment). This claim completes the picture of the of the wicked. In Job’s earlier comments, he claimed that the wicked only experienced good while upon the earth (vv. 7-13). Now, even in death, the wicked are able to escape all evil. Those who travel attest to the fact that the wicked are not simply delivered from an eschatological day of future wrath, but, rather, they are delivered from all of the calamities which Job’s friends claimed would come upon the wicked in life—presumably culminating in their death.

6.4.5.3 No Accountability in Life, No Liability in Death—vv. 31-33

Thus Job expresses his opinion that there is, in reality, no accountability of the wicked for their actions during their lifetime as well as no liability in death. Job continues this assertion in v. 31, where he initially points out the wicked’s lack of accountability to their own peers by questioning, “Who will denounce him to his face?” (מִי יָדַע עֲלֵיהָ פָּנָיו דְרֱכוֹ). Contrary to the companions’ idea of the wicked being humiliated and exposed (e.g., Bildad, 18:20; Zophar, 169.

1012 In both occurrences of the word Lýא in the verse, the preposition ל is used instead of the expected ב. Several commentators have suggested that the ל takes on a separative force in this context similar to the comparable preposition in Ugaritic and thus understand Lýא to mean “from the day.” Pope, Job, 161; Habel, Job, 323; Hartley, Job, 320, n. 6; Clines, Job 21-37, 515. Whereas it could be the case that the ל is used in this context as it is in Ugaritic to indicate separation, it is also important to note that the ל is used elsewhere in the Bible instead of ב with the word לי to indicate “on [a given] day.” See for example, Isa 10:3 (לְיוֹם פְקֻדָה), Ps 81:4 (וּלְיוֹם חֶנָּה), Prov 7:20 (לְיוֹם הָכְסֶא).

1013 Though this is the only time that the phrase ליִשָּׁתָּה עֲבָׁרוֹת appears in the Bible, the comparable phrases ליִשָּׁתָּה עֶבְרַיִית יְהוָּה (Ezek 7:19; Zeph 1:18), and simply ליִשָּׁתָּה (Zeph 1:15; Prov 11:4) understood in their respective contexts, suggest that divine wrath is being portrayed. Seow, Job 1-21, 891. Hakham notes that ל was also used in this same manner in Mishnaic Hebrew. Hakham, Job, 169.

1014 Some commentators have suggested emendation to the verb יָבָל because of the inconsistency in gender of the words in the phrase ליִשָּׁתָּה (Ezek 7:19; Zeph 1:18). Thus Clines, for example, contends that ליִשָּׁתָּה should be emended to either ליִצָּל or ליִצְל in reference to a wicked person, or the wicked in general, being saved from the day of God’s wrath. Clines, Job 21-37, 516. Seow, however, notes that the usage of masculine plural verbal forms with feminine plural subject is characteristic of Late Biblical Hebrew texts and evident on several occasions in Job (see 1:12; 15:6, 12; 16:22). Seow, Job 1-21, 891-92. Thus, perhaps the verb יָבָל is in fact properly conjugated and refers to the carrying out of God’s wrath.

1015 Wilson, Job, 236.
1016 Clines, Job 21-37, 533.
1017 See section 4.7.
20:27\textsuperscript{1018}, people fear and defer to the wicked, and no one dares denounce them.\textsuperscript{1019} Thus, the irreligious live their lives and expire without anyone ever daring to confront them concerning their impious character.\textsuperscript{1020}

Job makes a significant allusion to Bildad’s previous statements by mentioning the way (ךְֹדֶר) of the wicked. In 18:7-10 Bildad expounds upon the way of the wicked that perpetually causes them to falter, and claims that this stumbling is retribution for their wickedness.\textsuperscript{1021} Job now makes reference to the godless course of the life of the wicked. In this path, the wicked never falter, but rather progress in the course of their immorality.\textsuperscript{1022} Furthermore, the lack of accountability transcends the earthly realm. Not only does no one ever repay the wicked for their evil, but Job casts doubt upon the idea that God takes retributive action against them at all (וְהוּא-עָׁשָׁה מִי יְש לֶם-לוֹ). God has not established any system or authority upon the earth to consistently repay the wicked for their immoral conduct. When the wicked die, their deeds leading to their punishment are not disclosed. No one chastens them—not even God. Rather, they are glorified through a dignified burial, regardless of how they have lived.\textsuperscript{1023}

In contrast to the ignominious death of the wicked, in which they supposedly perish with no riches or memorial (15:29, 34; 18:16-17; 19; 20:15, 28), Job relates that the impious are provided a luxurious funeral\textsuperscript{1024} and are honored by their community after their deaths. The wicked

\textsuperscript{1018} See section 5.2.3.2.2.
\textsuperscript{1019} Hakham, \textit{Job}, 170; Habel, \textit{Job}, 330.
\textsuperscript{1020} Pope, \textit{Job}, 162.
\textsuperscript{1021} See section 4.2.
\textsuperscript{1022} Wilson, \textit{Job}, 236.
\textsuperscript{1023} Hartley, \textit{Job}, 321. Wilson lucidly expounds upon the sense this verse: “During life no confrontation mars the joyous prosperity of the wicked; no judgment, divine or human, calls them to account for their evil deeds…Job has removed either possibility as a source of judgment for the arrogant wicked. They live; they die; and nowhere do they suffer or receive appropriate recompense for their evil.” Wilson, \textit{Job}, 237.
\textsuperscript{1024} Andersen, \textit{Job}, 217.
are carried off in a procession to their grave (יְהוָ֖ה לִקְבָּרוֹת), instead of—like Job’s children—dying in a terrifying natural disaster without a decent burial (1:18-19). Once the wicked are properly buried, they are privileged to have watchmen safeguard their graves (גָּדִיש וְיִשְקוֹד)—perhaps to protect them from robbers, or simply to prevent disturbance of their bodies. Either way, with the wicked’s tomb properly guarded, their corpses are kept safe and their memory is perpetuated (contra Bildad in 18:17). Unlike what the friends have been invariably asserting, the wicked do not suffer and experience tragedy towards the end of their lives. Instead they end their lives in the greatest prosperity and honor imaginable to Job and his friends—“with a flourish; a sumptuous funeral, accompanied by vast crowds, a lavish tomb, all the marks of honor and respect.”

Thus, the death of the wicked is by no means an occasion on which the wicked are exposed as victimizers and are deprived of all goods (20:18). The day of their internment is, paradoxically

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1025 It could be that the plural לִקְבָּרוֹת refers to a site where there are multiple graves—either a familial burial ground (cf. 2 Chron 16:14 רָדִּישׁ וַאֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ עָלָיו חַזְקֵי [Hakham, Job, 170]), or perhaps a necropolis (Seow, Job 1-21, 892).

1026 See Isa 14:19-20 and Jer 22:19 for biblical examples of the humiliation associated with not being afforded a decent burial. Clines, Job 21-37, 533.

1027 Some commentators have suggested that the antecedent to the verb יִשְקוֹד is the wicked man himself, who watches over his own grave—ascribing to him post-mortem consciousness. See Delitzsch, Job, 1:418; Ball, Job, 295; Dhorme, Job, 323-24. The wording of this passage permits this reading, but the context makes it implausible. Job is not particularly concerned with attributing immortality to the wicked but, rather, respect and honor. It is more likely that Job insinuates that the graves of the wicked are kept by an unspecified guard. Hence, יִשְקוֹד should be understood impersonally as “one will watch over”—with the watchman guarding the tomb similar to the שומר in Ps 127:1 (ָּassembly מִשּׁׁרֶּם-יעֶר וַאֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמַּח). Rowley, Job, 152.

1028 Many commentators view יִשְקוֹד as being the Hebrew cognate of, and taking on the same meaning as, the Arabic جندث “grave, sepulcher” (Lane, 388). See Hartley, Job, 321, n. 8; Clines, Job 21-37, 516. This suggestion is plausible, but since Job mentions graves in the first line of the verse, one might also read יִשְקוֹד I to refer to a heap of dirt on top of the burial place (cf. 5:26). Hakham, Job, 170. See BDB, 155; HALOT, 178.

1029 Clines, Job 21-37, 534.

1030 Ball, Job, 296.

1031 Driver and Gray, Job, 1:190; Clines, Job 21-37, 533.

1032 Andersen, Job, 217.
to Job, a day on which the earth is especially sweet to the wicked (Job 1034, 1033) employs hyperbolic language\(^{1035}\) to depict a huge procession going before and after the wicked\(^{1036}\) undoubtedly disputing the arguments of his companions concerning the woeful end of the wicked (18:13-21; 20:20-29),\(^{1038}\) and as evidence that the wicked are esteemed upon their death. Not only is the end of life a common experience to all human beings—as Job had formerly pointed out (vv. 23-26)—but the fact that human experience actually suggests that the wicked prosper, not only in life, but also in death, makes the occasion of death an impossible criterion for judgment.\(^{1039}\)

### 6.4.5.4 The Unfaithfulness of the Friends—v. 34

Job’s friends’ accusations have progressed throughout the first two rounds of their dialogue to the point at which they have come to directly level at him the most offensive personal and theological accusations conceivable in their thought world. While Job has occasionally fired back, insulting his companions (cf. 16:2-4; 19:5),\(^{1040}\) as he does in v. 34a by communicating through a rhetorical question that it is impossible to comfort him with their nonsense (וְאֵיךְ תְנ חֲמוּנִי הָׁבֶל), he never quite so plainly expressed such a reaction to their severe allegations until chapter 21. Now,

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\(^{1033}\) It is clear that burial is being spoken of in this verse in light of the specific reference to the grave and description of someone guarding the burial ground. However, it is unclear exactly why Job depicts the dead being buried in a נָׁח ל and what exactly the phrase רִגְבֵי-נָׁח ל signifies. It is plausible that the usage of the word נָׁח ל, which can indicate a “torrent valley” or “wadi,” depicts a burial location in the lowlands similar to that of Moses in Deut 34:6 (וְנָׁח ל אֵל לָיָה נָח ל מֵאָרֶץ). It is not easy to distinguish why exactly the impious would be depicted as buried in a valley, but if this is the correct understanding, there could be an association with the revered Moses tradition. If the wicked of v. 33 are indeed buried in some type of lowland area close to a wadi (or, perhaps, in a cave [Seow, Job 1-21, 892]), then perhaps רִגְבֵי נָׁח ל refers to the sticky mud (cf. וּרְגָׁבִים יְדֻבָּק in 38:38) that might be dug out of the ground and then heaped over the body. Rowley, Job, 153.

\(^{1034}\) Habel, Job, 330.

\(^{1035}\) Seow, Job 1-21, 893.

\(^{1036}\) Hakham, Job, 170.

\(^{1037}\) Perhaps the usage of the verb מָשְכֵנִי with the preposition א חֲרֶי intends to convey that people were drawn to the wicked in life (cf. מָשְכֵנִי א חֲרֶי in Song 1:4). This allure continued until the death of the wicked when their funeral procession consists of those who admired them in life.

\(^{1038}\) Hartley, Job, 321.

\(^{1039}\) Wilson, Job, 237.

\(^{1040}\) See introduction to chapter 6 for further comments regarding these verses.
at the end of his diatribe against his friends’ injurious commentary on his situation, Job makes his own accusations against his friends.

Of all of the denunciations Job could have made against his friends as he finishes his extensive reply to their misguided analysis of his situation, Job only accuses his friends of one offense—treason. The only thing that remains from the companions’ supposed solutions to his tragic predicament is their unfaithfulness (וּתְשוּבֹתֵיכֶם נִשְא רֹמָּא). All of the other erroneous commentary effectively disappears and is forgotten\(^{1041}\) by Job because it is significantly less important than their lack of loyalty to Job and their blind allegiance to God. They have been unfaithful to Job\(^ {1042}\) in that they have been worthless in their responsibility as friends to provide him comfort, which was the primary reason for them visiting him (cf. 2:11 דוּנָלָא וּנָלָא לְנָחָו וּנָלָא לְאָו).\(^ {1043}\) It is safe to say that, “(t)he agony of Job in this speech lies not in his conflict with God but with his friends, who have shown no capacity to understand his slight from anything but a traditional perspective.”\(^ {1044}\)

It is because of the companions’ strict adherence to this traditional perspective that Job believes that they have also been unfaithful to God. Their endeavor to provide Job with orthodox responses concerning his situation have led them into a place of theological indiscretion that they are unable to escape. Job’s knows first-hand that these responses are untrue and therefore misleading. Yet as the dialogues advance, and the intensity of the accusations increase, Job increasingly perceives that his friends brutally used their theological system of just retribution to hurt rather than to comfort him. Their persistence in their theological misguidedness demonstrates a level of unfaithfulness to God that renders Job’s friends theologically dangerous.\(^ {1045}\) They think

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\(^{1041}\) Seow, *Job 1-21*, 893.

\(^{1042}\) Hakham, *Job*, 171.

\(^{1043}\) See further discussion concerning Job’s friends’ “consolations” above in section 6.3.

\(^{1044}\) Habel, *Job*, 324.

\(^{1045}\) Seow, *Job 1-21*, 877.
they know how God invariably works. When experience does not line up with their theology, they consider their dogma to be more important than experience and superimpose their theology upon the reality ordered by God. This arrogant approach to theology is indeed “teaching God knowledge,” and, in Job’s opinion, it is theologically wrong. This is the harshest accusation that Job, a God-fearing pious man, could ever pronounce against his friends.

6.5 Summary

Job 21 marks more than merely the end of the second round of speeches. This chapter thoroughly refutes the arguments that Job’s friends have presented in favor of abiding by traditional wisdom, and using the just retribution rubric to determine one’s level of impiety. This certainly does not mean that Job’s friends have given up on their dogmatic adherence to their paradigm (e.g. 22:5, 14-18), but Job’s comprehensive reply to their specific claims nullifies all potential accusations stemming from their paradigm. Throughout the rest of the book of Job, the allegations of Job’s wickedness, and likewise the imagery associated with it, are not quite as sustained, and never as extensively answered, as they are in this response. Thus, the motif pertaining to the fate of the wicked dwindles after Job repeatedly alludes to specific rhetoric and imagery of his companions’ speeches to argue against the applicability of the doctrine of just retribution to his situation. As intensely as Job’s friends claim that God punishes the wicked, Job conversely claims that misfortune is not an adequate test of wickedness. In fact, the prosperity of the wicked is that which observation and experience attest as reality and not tribulation.

It becomes evident through Job’s response that he perceives, and responds to, the latent references to his formerly prosperous life as depicted in the prologue. Job replies to these allusions by drawing from human experience and strives to direct his friends’ attention to the realities of life around them. This is precisely the method Job takes concerning his friends’ repeated allusions to the demise of the wicked’s children and the dispossession of their ill-gotten financial prosperity.
Upon recognizing that the companions are alluding to his former state to suggest that the death of Job’s children and animals are indications of his wickedness, Job counters their arguments by pointing out that empirical observation exposes major inconsistencies in their theology. Initially, the wicked’s cattle are extremely fertile resulting in perpetual affluence. Additionally, they are blessed with an abundance of joyful children, who are free from any residual punishment that apparently should have afflicted their parents.

Job finds another theological flaw related to the just retribution paradigm, concerning the fate of one’s children. Punishment rendered upon the children of the wicked is not a viable form of assessing a person’s character. If just retribution were a legitimate system, suffering would immediately come upon the sinner, who should be aware that he is being punished. Impious people do not care about the fate of their families after they die. This refutes any contention that punishment of the wicked’s children instead of them could serve as just retribution. This argument eliminates the companions’ potential critique of Job’s observations of the wicked living in prosperity by suggesting that punishment does not always come upon the wicked, but their children suffer in their place. This too is rejected by Job as wrong.

Job specifically addresses the oft-mentioned contention that the joy of the wicked is short-lived, resulting in their dying horrible deaths as a result of divine retribution for their misdeeds. Nothing could be further from observable truth, in Job’s opinion. The wicked and their households live long joyous lives, blessed with physically strong bodies. The wicked die in due time, like everyone, without anxiety serving as a harbinger of their imminent death. Once human beings are laid to rest, it is impossible to distinguish among them. According to Job, this essentially discredits the use of death as a viable criterion for determining one’s character.

Nevertheless, though all end up in the grave, posthumous honor of the wicked further demonstrates the impossibility of death as a valid criterion for wickedness. Glorification of the
wicked is exemplified through a colossal procession leading their remains to their burial ground. Once laid to rest, the wicked continue to be respected as a guard watches over their grave. They are never held accountable, or even confronted, for their misdeeds. They are prosperous in life and venerated after their deaths. This is a further indication for Job that the system of just retribution does not apply in his circumstances.

The fact that the wicked escape calamity is observed by Job, but further substantiated by travelers outside of the community. Despite these observations, Job’s friends obstinately adhere to their belief system. They have moved from friends who initially strived to demonstrate compassion for Job, to subtle accusers, to outright assailants of his character, to traitors who cannot be dissuaded of an unrealistic view of divine order that does not conform to their doctrine.

Job 21 is not merely the end of the second round of speeches. For all intents and purposes, here Job provides the conclusive answer to the extensive arguments concerning his situation matching the fate of the wicked. Job ultimately demonstrates that the claims his friends have made, including all of the major points that they have asserted regarding the fate of the wicked, are simply wrong in light of universal experience. Thus, in Job’s companions’ appeals to God’s exacting retribution upon the sinner, they have failed at their objective of providing comfort and have proven themselves disloyal to Job and to God. Job may not have convinced his friends yet that, if there is one exception to their dogma, it is he. He has, however, convinced the reader.
7 Summary & Conclusions

The validity of Job’s counterclaims presented in chapter 21 is up to the reader to deliberate at this point. Eliphaz demonstrates his reluctance to consider Job’s rejoinder and immediately advances further accusations against him in a denunciatory response in his next speech (22:1-30). However, regardless of additional accusations at this point alluding to Job’s wickedness—despite the companions’ further insistence on the retribution theory, and insinuations that Job’s situation is a case in point—Job has definitively answered them. Consequently, Job redirects his complaints to the vertical axis, once again protesting his circumstances to God. Job does not cease grieving, nor does he desist from his claim to innocence. However, following his rebuttal in chapter 21, he is essentially finished directly addressing his friends’ retribution ideology and accusations of wickedness.

It becomes progressively evident throughout the first two cycles of dialogue that, not only is theodicy a dominant theme, the fate of the wicked is also a major concern for Job and his companions. For this reason, it is imperative to analyze the first two dialogues in light of this motif and refrain from an approach that exclusively considers the question concerning the theological reason as to why hardship falls upon the pious. As Job’s friends strive to vindicate divine justice, they repeatedly describe the disastrous fate of those who do not honor God. It emerges that the goal of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar is to explain Job’s trials in light of traditional wisdom, which propagates the doctrine of just retribution. Their homogenous explanations suggest that Job suffers because he has somehow wronged God. Through their usage of vivid imagery relating to the fate of the wicked—particularly in the second round of speeches—Job’s friends eventually accuse him of being one of the very wicked they describe.

Job’s friends’ conclusive application of their dogma to his personal situation causes him to
scrutinize the foundation of their theology. Job concludes that traditional wisdom is not a satisfactory foundation on which to establish the sweeping consequences of the doctrine of just retribution. Experience must be taken into consideration—a claim that immediately calls attention to the fact that the wicked not only experience better life conditions than Job, but altogether prosper. Consequently, Job is compelled to confront his friends with the empirical evidence gathered from experience that questions the validity of their theory holding that the trials that had come upon Job should befall the impious alone. Because of Job’s integrity, he cannot accede to his friends’ doctrine and thus resorts to presenting a case before God rather than falsely indicting himself.¹⁰⁴⁶ To depend exclusively upon traditional wisdom is to eliminate human experience, which, according to Job, takes precedence in coming to terms with divine justice. To trust in their theological system of just retribution would be to admit fabricated wrongdoing in order use God for personal gain. For Job, this is the essence of wickedness.¹⁰⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Job takes pains in chapter 21 to reject straightforwardly the application of his friends’ dogma—especially to his situation. Job’s conscientious rebuttals, which claim that the wicked prosper rather than perish, relate to the companions’ depictions of the doctrine of just retribution in such a way that Job is depicted as unequivocally invalidating their theories concerning his suffering, as well as negating their traditional wisdom as the only manner in which truth concerning his circumstances can be attained. This is Job’s tour de force relating to the prosperity of the wicked, and a presentation of the contradiction this fact poses to the doctrine of just retribution.

Studying the passages that treat the fate of the wicked in the book of Job alongside extrabiblical literature reveals that the book of Job not only fits within its ancient Near Eastern literary

¹⁰⁴⁶ Purdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 193-94.
context, but in fact, the dialogues are notably conversant with the other wisdom sections of the Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature. This is particularly evident in the characters’ utilization of comparable rhetoric and imagery to treat similar themes apparent in ancient Near Eastern compositions. Job subsequently adopts this rhetoric and imagery in his responses, climaxing in chapter 21. The following sections summarize the major motifs and imagery relating to the fate of the wicked that are apparent in the first two cycles of dialogues. Each section briefly outlines how the themes and language of Job can be considered in light of similar findings in other sections of the Bible and with ancient Near Eastern literature.

7.1 Recurrent Themes Related to Retribution

7.1.1 Appeal to Traditional Wisdom

Bildad commences his first speech by making an overt appeal to the authority of traditional wisdom as the basis for his trustworthiness, and as the best means for verifying the cause of Job’s trials. This appeal to ancient wisdom is not only repeated by Job’s companions (e.g. 15:10, 17-19; 20:4-5), but it is also apparent in other biblical literature (e.g., Deut 32:7). The invocation of ancient tradition to establish authority and wisdom transcends the Bible and appears in diverse forms in several ancient Near Eastern compositions. For instance, legendary ancient Near Eastern kings identified with the seven *apkallū*—sages from antiquity who possessed superb wisdom (e.g. the “Myth of Adapa”). Another composition, Šimā Milka, quite pragmatically demonstrates the emphasis upon former generations for wisdom in that it features a father instructing his son while appealing to ancient ancestors. Ultimately, ancient Near Eastern scribes began identifying with early figures so as to make their writings more authoritative. Consequently, respect for ancient authorship may have been reflected in the late periods when prominent families began assuming patronyms of real or imaginary ancient ancestors—some of whom were purported to be sages.
Job challenges his friends’ confidence in traditional wisdom by suggesting that those who have traveled and have not been indoctrinated in traditional wisdom by the friends’ community would point out that their theology does not correspond with experience (21:29). In this way, Job asserts that his friends have not learned much from their forefathers. Their complete reliance upon tradition demonstrates that their accusations stem from naivety and not true wisdom. Perhaps at one point Job may have agreed with conventional wisdom, but by the end of the second round of dialogues, Job asserts that experience trumps tradition.

7.1.2 Transience of Wealth and Impending Poverty

The claim that the wicked lose their wealth as a result of their impiety is another theme that repeats in Job’s friends’ speeches. Eliphaz broaches this discussion by depicting the stubborn rebellious as an overweight man who dwells amongst ruins (15:27-28). Eliphaz explicitly states that the impious man is deprived of using his fleeting possessions to increase his wealth (v. 29). Hence, according to Eliphaz the prosperity of the wicked is simply an illusion.

Zophar most expressly harps on the retributive consequence of lost wealth, as it dominates the lion’s share of his speech in chapter 20. Zophar contends that the wicked obtain their ill-gotten gain by exploitation of the poor. Yet, despite the impious’ efforts to maintain those possessions, they are forced to make restitution. Thus Zophar, similar to Eliphaz, claims that the prosperity of the wicked is a temporary phenomenon brought to an abrupt end by fatal retribution (see 20:10, 15-18). This conclusion coincides with similar statements dispersed throughout Proverbs (1:13, 19, 31; 10:2, 16; 11:18; 13:11; 15:6; 21:6).

Warnings against attaining illicit gain are found in a number of ancient Near Eastern compositions (e.g., Šimâ Milka, Ballad of Early Rulers, Kirta, Babylonian Theodicy). However, the assertion that wealth attained by illicit means cannot remain in the possession of the wicked is a theme particularly established in Amenemope. This composition encourages goodness toward
the poor and weak, while using imagery similar to Zophar’s (see the discussion below) to indicate the ephemeral nature of illicit possessions.

Job however dissents from the traditional biblical opinion shared with several ancient Near Eastern compositions. Job repudiates the suggestions that the wicked are dispossessed of their wealth—whether ill-gotten, or gained by other means. In fact, Job’s observations indicate that those who do not honor God experience good fortune—an observation which is shared by the sufferer of the *Babylonian Theodicy*. Job claims that the impious abound with unwarranted rewards as is evident in their abundance of reproductive cattle (20:10). This abundance of fertile cattle is clearly understood in its biblical context as an indication of divine blessing (Deut 28:4; Ps 144:13) and hence, the implication that God’s system of justice is unintelligibly skewed.

7.1.3 The Absence of Offspring and Infertility of the Impious

Childlessness is generally considered a sign of divine judgment in the Bible (cf., Gen 20:18). Thus, it is unsurprising that Job’s friends would point this out in the second round of speeches and insinuate that he is devoid of his children because of his wrongdoing. Barrenness is hinted by Eliphaz at the beginning of the second round of speeches through his depiction of bare branches lacking the ability to reproduce (15:32b-33). Eliphaz does not remain subtle for long as his next statement explicitly states that the godless and all in their band are doomed to infertility (v. 34a).

This straightforward and harsh remark concerning the infertility of the wicked is matched by Bildad in what he presents to be a definitive statement about the barrenness of the impious. Bildad also depicts the wicked as a desolate plant\(^{1048}\) to suggest their complete eradication, and perhaps even the annihilation of their offspring (18:16). The wicked’s lack of offspring becomes

\(^{1048}\) See the elaboration of botanical and agricultural imagery in section 7.2.
increasingly evident as Bildad proceeds to assert that the memory of the wicked perishes and that no offspring survive them (vv. 17, 19).

Two Ugaritic texts, *The Epic of Kirta* and the *Epic of Aqhat*, provide examples demonstrating that lacking offspring was indeed considered a serious problem in ancient Near Eastern thought. These compositions affirm that being childless was viewed as a severe misfortune, signifying the impossibility of perpetuating one’s name and memory. This, perhaps, serves as a backdrop to the claims of Job’s friends as they play on one of the greatest personal fears of the people in the biblical world.

Job straightforwardly contradicts the assertion that the wicked are not blessed with offspring. Job claims that the wicked have plenty of children who are established around them, celebrate joyous activities, while benefitting from complete safety (21:8-9, 11-12). Not only this, but the character of the wicked is such that, even if their impiety were to affect their ability to have children—or their actual children—they would not care (vv. 19-21).

**7.1.4 The Wicked are Terrorized by Perpetual Fear**

The idea that the wicked could never experience peace is one that appears in the Bible (cf. Isa 57:20-21). Job’s friends all agree that the wicked are constantly fretting over their impending judgment. This is most strongly stated by Eliphaz, who claims that the wicked are always in a personal storm of sorts, hearing the voices of frightful things perpetually ringing in their ears. This fear provokes the wicked to irrationally imagine calamity coming upon them to the point where they are overpowered by anguish (15:20-21, 24). The wicked experiencing fear leading them to delusion is also portrayed in Proverbs, where the wicked are depicted as fleeing when there is nothing chasing them (Prov 28:1). The wicked’s precarious condition of always fearing their demise is briefly echoed by Bildad (18:11), and Zophar (20:25).
The sufferer in *Ludhlu* also evidently experiences perpetual fear to the point where the sufferer’s agony transcends the physical domain to the affective and psychological domains. The protagonist complains of suffering apprehension in his heart, terror, panic, and perpetual fear. The sufferer then asserts that there is a pursuer seeking him. Yet, the identity of the unnamed assailant is not clear, leaving open the possibility that it is a figment of the sufferer’s imagination brought about by his distress.

Job challenges the idea that the wicked spend even one day fretting over the consequences of their actions. The reason for Job is that the wicked completely disregard God by never praying, have no desire to know anything about God, and do not fear any retribution whatsoever for not heeding God (21:14-15). On the contrary, despite the wicked’s intentional inattentiveness to God, they live out their days in prosperity and die without experiencing any unusual circumstances (v. 13).

### 7.1.5 The Ephemerality of the Existence of the Wicked and their Public Demise

The sentence for wickedness in the retribution theology paradigm based upon traditional wisdom is the death penalty, according to Job’s friends. This is mentioned early in the second cycle of speeches by Eliaphaz, who states that the wicked are marked for the sword and know that their day of darkness approaches (15:23). However, this doctrine emphatically comes to light in the second speeches of Bildad and Zophar, in which they claim that the wicked will die horrible deaths (Bildad [18:5-6, 18], Zophar [20:6-8, 16, 23, 26, 28]). Additionally, Bildad and Zophar assert the public nature of just retribution, and adduce the wicked as examples of divine justice (Bildad [18:20], Zophar [20:28]). Other biblical literature similarly pronounces the death penalty on the wicked (Prov 13:9; 24:20), as well as for those who simply do not honor God’s commands (e.g., Exod 20:12; 21:17; Lev 20:9; Deut 5:16; 27:16).
Both the ephemeral existence of the wicked as well as their public demise are untruthful consequences of wickedness to Job. Job asserts that the wicked do not die early or quickly, but maintain their strength throughout long and prosperous lives (21:7; 13a). Job does concede that the end of the lives of the wicked may, in fact, be a public event. Nevertheless, he contends that the wicked are publicly celebrated at their funerals. Contrary to people travelling from the ends of the earth to witness the punishment upon the wicked, throngs of people gather together to pay tribute to their lives. Even after their deaths, the wicked are paid their due respect by their grave being guarded as though they were honorable during life (21:32-33).

7.2 The Imagery of Job’s World

The above issues that deeply concern the characters in Job are prevalent themes in other biblical literature, as well as in ancient Near Eastern compositions. Job eventually responds to these recurring motifs which his friends use to ascertain his guilt. Needless to say, Job disputes his friends’ application of their dogma to his personal situation and is willing to confute the fine points of their theology, regardless of whether there is biblical or extra-biblical precedent to their arguments.

As the characters engage in dialogue relating to the fate of the wicked, they utilize imagery familiar from the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern literature to support their points. This section tracks and summarizes three of the main points of imagery used to indict Job, and how they are used throughout Job, in the Bible, and, where available, in ancient Near Eastern compositions.

7.2.1 The Dichotomy between Light and Darkness

The imagery of light and darkness is used in Job to communicate at least two related points. Eliphaz uses the imagery of darkness in 5:14 to indicate the folly of those who would proudly consider themselves wise. The implication is that those who are in the light have the ability to
make wise decisions, but those whom God deprives of light are not sensible. This imagery is expanded in Eliphaz’s second speech to assert that darkness is the consequence of wickedness. Eliphaz intensifies the application of this imagery and concludes that God does not simply hinder the self-assumed wisdom of the impious, but that the wicked actually die—thereby equating darkness with death (15:22-23, 30). The fact that darkness conveys the idea of destruction is corroborated by Zophar’s usage of the imagery. Zophar claims that darkness lies in wait for the ephemeral treasures of the wicked in order to eradicate them (20:26).

The dichotomy between light and darkness is most notable in Bildad’s second speech in which he adopts the image of a lamp to make his point. According to Bildad, those residences deprived of the light of a lamp are those under the dominion of death (18:5-6). Thus, the realm of light is life, and those who are expelled from light’s domain meet their demise in the darkness. This is precisely what happens to the wicked, who are banished from this world and completely annihilated (v. 18). The usage of the lamp to communicate the dichotomy between light and darkness, as well as the same meaning of the imagery, pervades Proverbs (13:9; 20:20; 24:20), and is also evident in the Torah (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16).

There are indications in ancient Near Eastern literature that the imagery of light and darkness was similarly understood outside of Israel. Ancient Near Eastern compositions depict the netherworld as dark and devoid of light (e.g., Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld). In addition to this, light and darkness can also symbolize the quality of one’s life in this literature. Those who are in the presence of light benefit from a good quality of life, while those who are deprived of this light are better off dead (e.g., The Ballad of Early Rulers).

Job also uses imagery related to light and darkness in his response to his friends. In 21:17 Job clearly refers to Bildad’s lamp imagery and asserts that the wicked are infrequently, if ever, deprived of light. According to Job, the wicked do not suffer the dreadful end suggested by his
friends, they are not driven to folly, and their prosperity indicates that their quality of life does not decrease at all.

7.2.2 Botanic/Agricultural Imagery

The first round of speeches is generally characterized as gentler in tone than the second. This is evident in how botanic imagery is used within the first two rounds. Initially, Bildad uses botanic imagery in 8:11-14, 16-19 as a manner of distinguishing between the pious and the impious, suggesting, in agreement with other biblical sources (e.g., Jer 17:5-8), that the rejecters of God would wither, while the pious are firmly planted. Job subsequently takes up this imagery and alludes to a withering plant as a metaphor for the brevity of human life (14:7-14). However, by Eliphaz’s second speech this botanic imagery is intensified not simply to suggest the brevity of human life, but also to indicate divine punishment as a result of just retribution (15:30-33).

Bildad continues expanding this imagery in 18:16-17, 19, where, through reference to the “roots” of the wicked, he suggests the eradication of their children. According to Bildad, both the wicked and their progeny suffer the effects of their impiety. Bildad’s reference to the destroyed plant as retribution upon the impious is familiar from depictions of divine judgment in other biblical literature (e.g., Amos 2:9 and Hos 9:16). Thus, Bildad’s point emerges—not only does Job suffer the consequences of his offense, but Job’s children are included in the retribution for his sin.

Job alludes to botanic imagery to suggest that the wicked are not as weak as chaff and their stability in the wind should not be likened to the frailty of straw, according to Job (21:18). Job uses this imagery to reinforce one of the major points he emphasizes in response to his friends’ claims—neither the impious nor their children consistently suffer the consequences of their wrongdoing.
7.2.3 Swallowing and Vomiting

Imagery using words related to eating generally take on the sense of destruction in the first two cycles of Job (cf., 1:16; 2:3; 10:8; 15:24; 18:13; 20:26). However, Zophar uses the imagery of swallowing to depict the wicked striving to maintain their ill-gotten gain. Since people always pays for their misdeeds according to retributive justice, Zophar claims that these “swallowed” possessions are returned through the act of vomiting (20:15, 18; cf. vv. 20-21a). Although the imagery of consumption and vomiting depict thievery and retribution as used exclusively by Zophar, it plays a major role in locating Job in its ancient Near Eastern literary setting through conspicuously shared imagery with Amenemope. For example, in Amenemope the wicked man cannot “swallow” the poor man’s goods—that is, keep them in his possession—because obtaining this type of gain by exploiting the poor is repulsive:

_A poor man’s goods are a block in the throat,_
_It makes the gullet vomit._ (14.7-8)\(^{1049}\)

This statement depicts nearly identical imagery to that in Job 20:15, in which the wicked is forced—in that case by God—to vomit up his ill-gotten gain. In this manner, comparable imagery is shared by Job and Amenemope to make the same points concerning illicit possessions.

7.3 Moving Forward

Every writing project has limitations and this work is no exception. Consequently, several topics related to the work at hand remain unexplored in this project because they were outside of its scope. This section outlines several ways to move beyond the current investigation into the subject matter of this dissertation.

\(^{1049}\) Lichtheim, _AEL_, 2:154-55.
7.3.1 Reconciling Job’s Honesty with God’s Response

The endeavor to reconcile Job’s audacious accusations against God with the commendatory words spoken to Job in 42:7 is not a new task. However, focusing on the sections of Job which relate to the theme of the fate of the wicked allows us to present the issue from a new angle. It is certainly recognized by most that Job complains and makes harsh comments to God regarding his circumstances. However, Job’s words relating to the prosperity of the wicked magnify his claims concerning God’s injustice. Job does not only suggest that he does not understand his suffering, or that he is treated unfairly, but blatantly states that God is an unjust judge who favors the wicked, coddling them with all types of worldly blessings (9:20-24; 21:7-15). Viewing Job’s allegations in this light begs the questions: Why is God in Job 42:7-8 depicted as offering a favorable statement to Job after his blatant contempt of God? Are there other biblical or extra-biblical compositions that could provide a backdrop for the bizarre case of someone harshly criticizing one’s god and its system of justice, and subsequently being commended?

7.3.2 True Wisdom in Job: A Diatribe against Existing Values?

Bendt Alster notes that, “a critical attitude towards existing values…may be considered an unmistakable sign of ancient Near Eastern ‘wisdom’ literature.”¹⁰⁵⁰ In Job, there is a full-blown clash between the traditional and the critical—between Job’s friends’ wisdom and what Job presents as a sort of counter-wisdom. Given Alster’s well-founded statement, Job’s extremely critical position on traditional wisdom, voiced through his observations relating to the prosperity of the wicked, might be the essence of wisdom in the book. Perhaps it is through Job’s criticism of the traditional wisdom espoused in Proverbs and in the Torah that the book of Job makes its greatest contribution to the wisdom tradition. The conventional biblical principles concerning

retribution that Job criticizes are held in common with several thematically comparable ancient Near Eastern compositions that use similar imagery and rhetoric to address the same issues as Job. Therefore, the idea that Job provides wisdom in presenting the contrary to that which was generally considered to be wise in the Bible and ancient Near East deserves further investigation.

7.3.3 Tracing the Retribution Principle through Second Temple Judaism

Not only is the issue of divine retribution prevalent in the Bible, but the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have demonstrated that divine retribution continued to be at the forefront of Jewish thought in the following years. This is not, in and of itself, surprising because of the continued importance of the Bible for Jewish people through the exile and into the Second Temple Period. What is interesting, however, is that the sectarian writings of the Qumran community were particularly concerned about retribution upon the wicked who were in positions of power (e.g., Psalms Pesher [4QpPs on Psalm 37). They also used similar imagery to the book of Job in order to differentiate the pious from the wicked—namely, the dichotomy between light and darkness (e.g., The War Scroll [1QM]), and lion imagery (Commentary on Nahum [4Q169]). It also appears as though Jewish thought pertaining to retribution upon the wicked took on an eschatological form during the Second Temple period. That is to say, the wicked might prosper and not necessarily be punished for their misdeeds during their lifetime, but they would eventually suffer retribution in the eschaton, or in the life to come.

The understanding of just retribution in the eschaton and the dichotomy between light and darkness to differentiate between good and evil emerge in early Christianity as well, which is evident in the writings of the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10; Jn 1:5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:4-5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46). Just retribution theology did not fade after Job—despite his harsh words against the doctrine. Rather, the awareness of this dogma seems to have been heightened.
Tracking this motif and the imagery associated with it in later Jewish writings is an area that deserves further investigation.\footnote{1051}

### 7.4 Concluding Observations

Despite the limitations of this work, the observations made through the exegesis of the sections of Job dealing with the fate of the wicked demonstrate specific themes, imagery, and rhetoric that pervade the first two cycles of dialogue. These considerations exhibit interaction of the characters among one another, and the greater biblical and extra-biblical wisdom traditions. This interplay suggests that the poet of Job shared the thought world of the wider ancient Near Eastern literary environment. The fate of the wicked, particularly the question with regard to why the wicked prospered, was a dominant theological question that permeated the ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition and should continuously be attended to as a major aspect of the complex discussion between Job and his companions.

\footnote{1051 As an example of this type of work, see Miryam T. Brand, *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and Its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature* (JAJSup 9. Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 35-282, in which the author analyses texts from the Second Temple period which relate to the origin of sin.}
Bibliography


תקציר

ספר איוב

נחשב

מקדמת

דנאל לכתב

המקראי

הרלוונטי,

כמו גם לכתב הנוגע באופנים הישירים ביותר בשאלה התיאולוגית באשר לתיאודיציה.

רבים ממפרשי הספר לאורך הדורות התמקדו בהסברים תיאולוגיים לבעיה המוסרית והדתית של העולה בתמודדות של חפי הפשע עם קשיים וסבל.

ה荖ס על נושא התיאודיציה לא התחזק גם הוא,

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התמקדו ת החוקרים בסוגיית סבלם של חפי הפשע – המוצداف ככזה, צמצמה את ה累累בスタית הפרשנית לשני סבבי השיח הראשונים שבספר:

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רעיו של איוב מבטאים את התפיסות המקובלות בספרות החכמה באשר לגורלו של הרשע,

אילך איוב נותן קול להשקפותיו וופרט את מסקנותיו על דינו של המזרד של העול,

הנוגעNicholas Goodwin ו חדשות מ損害ו של איוב בסוףו של המחזור השני של הדיאלוגים בספר.

איוב מנגד, איינו מקבל את תפישת רעיו בדיבור גמולים טיבור, אלא שמתוך בדיבורוLLUו עקרוב וישיר.

 очерיתם של חגוריה של ח="#renalはありません, חגוריה האזרחיות, לודרוף איוב, מפריך את גישה העירה בדיבור הצדק האלוהי של הדיאלוגים של שיר.

והישיא.

 לז刺客ו בחזון פעמים בעיתונות רעיית מתוכננים מבוקד בתחומ השביוסアイוב לשני

הdivide על החשש של גם על אייב בספלי שشرح של הדיאלוגים לפכנראות.

אילן, אלא שהוא ממקול את התקשרו בדיבור על אייב בספלי עם הראשון וכלול שחרור של הצדק האלוהי של הדיאלוגים של שיר.

וזאת מהבנת ההקשר של ספרות החכמה כענף החובר לספרות החכמה הקדומה שנודעה בעמים שכנים.
In the context of comparing Job's perspective to other biblical and ancient Near Eastern perspectives, the study examines the relationship between Job and impartial punishment in the light of Job's view of the flourishing of the wicked.

What does Job's defense offer regarding the flourishing of the wicked in the context of the prevailing theories of punishment in the ancient Near East and other ancient Eastern cultures?

Currently, the research focuses on this question, particularly on the rhetoric, analogies, and literary structure of the writings in the Book of Job that engage in discussions of the fate of the wicked.

This investigation examines the question through an analysis of relevant interpretative frameworks of Job in relation to writings from the ancient Near East and the Bible.

Job's defense is effective, as it offers a final and ultimate response to the views expressed in the preceding chapters, and it brings Job's innocence to light.

Job denies directly that his sins are the cause of his suffering, as he did in the first speech of the second round of speeches in the Book of Job.

This section of the research focuses on metaphors and implications related to the law for the wicked.

Philosophical and theological perspectives of God's justice and direct compensation as the end aim to encourage Job, who has lost confidence in his earlier hopes and expectations, to hold on to his confidence in God's justice and trust in God's promise of ultimate salvation.

The chapter concludes by listing the topics covered in the research work and summarizing the research findings.

The chapter opens with an analysis of the role of fraud among the wicked, as it emerges in the dialogues in the Book of Job.

The presentation of the problem includes a review of the research literature, and it concludes that previous studies have not adequately focused on the concept of punishment as it is understood in the context of the first two cycles of speeches in the Book of Job, where the wicked enjoy power and prosperity.

The reduced literature on this subject justifies the scope of the current research, which sheds light on the topic of punishment in the Book of Job through an examination of its rhetoric, analogies, structure, and theological content, based on earlier writings from Israel and the ancient Near East.

It is common to find in the first cycle of speeches in the Book of Job contrasts between the first and subsequent cycles.

Job is not directly accused by God that his sins were the cause of his suffering, as he did in the fifth speech in the first cycle of speeches in the Book of Job.

The second chapter of this research focuses on metaphors and implications related to the law for the wicked.

Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad express their belief in God's justice - that justice is direct reward, and this encourages Job, who is certain of God's justice, to hold on to his confidence in God's promise of ultimate salvation.
האלוהית (פרק ט).دلדו, כול אדס לאפיין את התנגוות על—in חותמות בכוללorna בורחUTC. מענה ומאשימים
למענה את האל או עשתו צדק, וליפך Doing הליפך Institute את תורת ההגון המובילית כפי שמתנהלת בחרב הכרת
מקריאים וווזר מקראיים. תשובה המכלולת ומחרת הנגלה עד חזרה לדיבור, הממשים את תיאור הברית
ישיח לאסונות שפקדו אתו חובה והאריות להתחי
טענה זו מאשים עם למעשה את האל בחושה צדק, ولפיכך דוחה לפיכך את תפישות הגמול המסורתיות כפי שמתגלות בכתבי חכמה מקראיים וחוץ מקראיים.
תשובתו המגלגת זו ודחייתו הגלויה הם הזרז לברי צופר, המאשים את איוב באחריות ישירה לאסונות שפקדו אותו כעונש חכאי ל handjobו.
טענת צופר כנגד איוב מהווה פתיחה לפולח שישוע, ובו סיפוק ורגש הحصول עלレスشع כدرك לאסונות שפקוד
אלו איוב. בכבר זה, מקריאים רבים הろうם בכלים רבים ממאות מבאריאג נגדו והרשעים, ומצביעים על כל שענוגותי
של התנהנוה וזוגיות מכומת או נפשי המתאבד חולש והרשעים, ומוקדשים תפלות השלישי עד התשיעי והרביעי והדומיניות והброוזיות את אילימ בולד צופר, מבאתת לבואו של חומץ נפשי. גיתות זה על דיבור אלוהי מציון הבן מנופים של דיבוריה, ומו המפעילות לדoverflow בורה את
ה.XPATH
עלו כל מוקדש הפרק שלישית בחיבור זה מוקדש לבחינת הגנתו של אליפז על תפישות החכמה המсорתיות
אודות דרג של השרשים (י"ח 17–35), בתחלת נאום המתקדמת אלפים מבצבר הנפשות המותרות של ה كسارة המאובד
את ביטוחים האופי של הזרחות המתמשכות באשר בלועות ו Immutable יסודות של חכמה. אולימפ גזר בודיר של יושר
מפלג שירוד מעוותי—shall והשגה כדרי—בדי לדובוט את השפעת הראב שבירודו ולאשים. עוד מתמקד הפקר הדומיניא
שונה בכרביר אולפים, מבנה ממיניים שנותנש منه筥ים. תפרשת ובית החכמה של "חַוֹשֶׁת" להفرح צório ייחוד של
החותמה קונול פריטים הבהילמות מציו
הפרק(rb| המنظרה כי הקנאים שנילו ביד (י"ח 5–21), שמעה בדרומיי ותוריי ממל אחור ייחד שער
הפרק הרובעדג וקנאים שניות ביד (י"ח 5–21), שמעה בדרומיי ותוריי ממל אחור ייחד שער
גורל יונתן של השישה. ביד נוצר בדרומיי התקדמת התנגוות שאר וה蛸 בכל הלואר nilai באישות וייני של חמידה והומר.
 occas מי ויר השרוע שמועלים equipos ההוא מטיית וביסודה. מבאי שישי חכמה בחרה. וי וי גזרה ממגננ משלים
ממדומים, ווספה לממצן בוד. נורה תמש את מתדלים ושר הרשעים במדומיות: את בח בן gamer עד מנות בפרס
בכוכמותו וראת מוקדש בבתה באלוהים.apolis מג־ברוד, בולד מתמקד בחותו הש):-, ואתו ומגננ מדרומיים
voie שמועליםإقليم חותר החמה民办铒"בקורון (י"ח 13), "מצל כתומ" (י"ח 14), לא די באך שיר
וסמלים,دلדו портал חוזי לא נראים שימשימי את שושלות הרשעים מקומד אזכר המוחל שמעה
בפסות,دلדו אנו בי読みים 이야기 דמיון עד ששותה השיחemi מקומד היא בפסות המשחתיא יאשמקוד או משינתה
בפרקים הבאים נובעים estilo להטיל עונש מטעם האל, והם ההלכות בהטלת העונש המכוונת. עונשה זו נכללת בהטלת העונש המכוונת מטעם האל, והיא אילוסטרציה פומבית באשר למקרא. בעומק תופעת הגמול הישרה שבה דוגלים רעי איוב. בפרק החמישי נבחן לעומקו את הנאום צופר השני (פרק כ), בו הוא מתמקד בעושרם של הרשעים שלא כדין ובחרלוסדו כעונש. צופר טען כי מקור הוןם של הרשעים טמון在其 פעולתם הנפשעת, והיא ניצול והתעמרות בעניים,}"בליעה" כביטוי לשמירתם הנלוזה על רכוש זה. צופר מדגיש כי עושרם ארעי בלבד, והחרף שמירתם הקניתי עשוי האל להשיב את רכושם כחלק לעונשם, כשיגרום להם "לתקיא" את אשר "בלעו" (פרק 15). דימוי זה של הקאת ההון שבולע המחוון נפוץ באפור משלי קדומים מעמים שכנים, ובעיקר נראה במשלי אמנמופה, שם – כמו בנאום צופר – הקאת ההון שבולע והוקעת על ידם של הרשעים לא דרכה. הקאת ההון של הרשעים בלתי נמנעת כפי שלא מן הנמנע חששם המתמיד מפני העשוי של העונש שיושת عليهم בידי האל. אורך חייהם מלאי החשש ובחרלוסדו,'){ץ קרימא, זוהי מגדיר לארד עתיד ההודא. זכר ענישודא בברלב מושווה ממקשה ההנחה של האל.عالج המתרשים את מתוכן, כסיום הצירוף שלumper (פרק 24).
עד הפרק כ', אויב מת удאן את נטעניו כבצק האל שערן של ענשה. בעומק אלה שמתו בנאומיים ישבו על צדקה, בעומק אלה שמתו בנאומיים ישבו על צדקא...
כحرישים מרצילים כתב האחד בכותב ובchers בן בברך, אוחרי. נטשו את הפרכה איוו בתנונים תהלוכותיו, הרשועים רוחו ודרו של הובא אורות תורמך גמדי ההירש, חנה פרק חכוה הפרכה והמשמש כבביס
לכירך כתרת הנגמ阪כ שיא מירית בпромышлен חילות, אשתתת ברא החומת הנגמ阪ו של ייב
ברק השביעי והאחדות בחיבור זה מוסכמות המשות השנויות המשות המתDireccion עדות מתጽחת תפישה הנגמ阪ו hipר
בחקה את עניין בהאורי, אם שואל אירי ברにする הסכמים הפרושים של הברכה. א. הפרישה הפרשיתואיתزادת אשית אuerdoים של הירש
א. תפצית הפוסט הymoon של הירשען: ב. תפישה הפוסט השיאוprarין והאמורים לקב א. פורחים של הירשען: ד. תפיקות
החרדת הירשען בפתון טמיד: ה. תפישה על דירבה ביר התחלות של הירשען ערום הפוסט ל. לאחר סיכום זה פרק
המחקה�ה בנתונים את רшение המסונים הדירומרים הפרכBizים הבריאים ליר ישים בברך, בנקרא, וehr عبرים מ
המחקהconciliation אוחר שלושה מסונים הדירומרים הפרכBizים הבריאים ליר ישים בברך, א. הפרישות הפרשית והאמורים המקולות בקיאק HOLD: ב. הפרישות הפרשית
מקולותylum היישרニー b. הפרישות הפרשית והאמורים המקולות בקיאק HOLD: עד כרי
בוחנה משמעת הירשען בתנונת הדירומרים הפרכBizים הבריאים הירשען, כפיCAPE והמשתת של הר詳しく
שן מכבי הira של הירשען שבשם.