
JOB 36: 1 Elihu also continued, and said,

Elihu vindicates God's justice, and his providential and gracious dealings with men, Job 36:1-9. Promises of God to the obedient, and threatenings to the disobedient; also promises to the poor and afflicted, Job 36:10-16. Sundry proofs of God's merely, with suitable exhortations and cautions, vv. 17-33.

Verse 1

Elihu also proceeded - Mr. Heath gives a good summary of this chapter. Elihu goes on to lay before Job the impropriety of his behavior towards God, and desires him to consider how vain it will prove. That God Almighty will never yield the point; that he will administer impartial justice to all men, Job 36:2-6. That the general course of his providence is to favor the righteous: and that though he may sometimes correct them in love, yet if they submit patiently to his fatherly corrections, they shall enjoy all manner of prosperity; but if they be stubborn, and will not submit, they will only draw down greater proofs of his displeasure, Job 36:7-16. He tells him that, had he followed the former course, he had probably, before now, been restored to his former condition; whereas, by persisting in the latter course, he was in a fair way of becoming a signal example of Divine justice, Job 36:17, Job 36:18. He therefore warns him to use the present opportunity, lest God should cut him off while he was in a state of rebellion against him; for with God neither wealth, power, nor any other argument that he could use, would be of any avail, Job 36:18-26. That God was infinitely powerful; there was no resisting him: and infinitely wise, as sufficiently appeared by his works; there was, therefore, no escaping out of his hands. That his purity was so great that the sun, in his presence, was more dim than the smallest ray of light when compared to that grand luminary; that his holiness was manifest by his aversion to iniquity; and his goodness, in supplying the wants of his creatures.

JOB 36: 2 "Bear with me a little, and I will show you; for I still have something to say on God's behalf.

Verse 2

That I have yet to speak on God's behalf - I have other proofs to allege in behalf of God's justice and providence.

JOB 36: 3 I will get my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

Verse 3

I will fetch my knowledge from afar - למרחוק lemerachok, "from the distant place," meaning probably both remote antiquity and heaven; see below. I will show thee that all antiquity and experience are on my side. I can bring proofs from the remotest ages and from the most distant countries to demonstrate that God is infinitely Wise, and can do nothing foolish or erroneous; that he is infinitely Powerful, and can bring all the purposes of his wisdom to effect; that he is infinitely

Good, and can will nothing, and can do nothing that is not good in itself, and well calculated to do good to his creatures. And I shall show that his operations in the heavens and on the earth prove and demonstrate the whole.

And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker - By proving the above points, the righteous conduct of God, and his gracious government of the world, will be fully established. That Elihu brings his knowledge from afar - from every part of the creation, as well as from the Divine nature - is evident from the end of the chapter.

1. The omnipotence of God; - God is great.
2. The eternity of God - We know him not, the number of his years cannot be found out, Job 36:26.
3. From the economy of God in the atmosphere, in dews, rain, vapor, and the irrigation of the earth; - He maketh small the drops, etc., Job 36:27, Job 36:28.
4. In the thunder and lightning, by which he performs such wonders in the atmosphere, and executes such judgments in the world; - Also who can understand the noise of his tabernacle? He spreadeth his light upon it. He judgeth the people, etc., Job 36:29-33.

JOB 36: 4 For truly my words are not false. One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.

Verse 4

My words shall not be false - My words shall be truth without falsity.

He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee - "The perfection of knowledge is with thee." Thou art a sensible, well-informed man, and will be able to judge of what I say.

JOB 36: 5 "Behold, God is mighty, and doesn't despise anyone. He is mighty in strength of understanding.

Verse 5

God is mighty and despiseth not any - He reproaches no man for his want of knowledge. If any man lack wisdom, he may come to God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. I prefer this to the passive sense, will not be despised.

He is mighty - Literally, "He is mighty in strength of heart;" he can never be terrified nor alarmed.

JOB 36: 6 He doesn't preserve the life of the wicked, but gives to the afflicted their right.

Verse 6

He preserveth not the life - He will not give life to the wicked; all such forfeit life by their transgressions.

But giveth right - Justice will he give to the afflicted or humble, ענייִם aniyim.

JOB 36: 7 He doesn't withdraw his eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne, he sets them forever, and they are exalted.

Verse 7

He withdraweth not his eyes - Exactly similar to those words of David, Psa 34:15: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous."

But with kings are they on the throne - I think the words should be read thus: - "But with kings upon the throne shall he place them; and they shall be exalted for ever." The word וישׁיבם vaiyeshibem, he will establish or place them, should be added to the first clause, as I have done; and then the sense becomes much clearer. Instead of לנצח fo da lanetsach, forever, perhaps to victory would be a better sense: "But with kings upon the throne will he place them; and they shall be exalted or triumph to victory." This is precisely the same idea, and conveyed in nearly the same words, as that of our Lord: - "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne;" Rev 3:21. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory," etc.; Rev 1:5, Rev 1:6.

JOB 36: 8 If they are bound in fetters, and are taken in the cords of afflictions,

Verse 8

And if they be bound in fetters - These are means which God uses, not of punishment, but of correction.

JOB 36: 9 then he shows them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly.

Verse 9

He showeth them their work - He shows them the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

That they have exceeded - יתגברו yithgabbaru, "that they have strengthened themselves," and did not trust in the living God; and therefore they would not help themselves when trouble came.

JOB 36: 10 He also opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity.

Verse 10

He openeth also their ear - He gives them to understand the reason why they are thus corrected, and commands them to return from those iniquities which have induced him to visit them with afflictions and distresses.

JOB 36: 11 If they listen and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.

Verse 11

If they obey and serve him - There may appear in the course of Providence to be some exceptions to this general rule; but it is most true, that this is literally or spiritually fulfilled to all the genuine followers of God. Every man is happy, in whatsoever circumstances, whose heart is unreservedly dedicated to his Maker.

JOB 36: 12 But if they don't listen, they shall perish by the sword; they shall die without knowledge.

Verse 12

But if they obey not - This also is a general rule, from which, in the course of Providence, there are only few, and those only apparent, deviations. Instead of they shall perish by the sword, the meaning of the Hebrew בשלח יעברו beshelach yaaboru, is, "By a dart they shall pass by." They shall be in continual dangers, and often fall before they have lived out half their days. Mr. Good translates: They pass by as an arrow. The Vulgate: Transibunt per gladium. "They shall pass away by the sword."

JOB 36: 13 "But those who are godless in heart lay up anger. They don't cry for help when he binds them.

Verse 13

But the hypocrites in heart - חנפּי chanphey, the profligates, the impious, those who have neither the form nor the power of godliness. The hypocrite is he who has the form but not the power, though he wishes to be thought as inwardly righteous as he is outwardly correct; and he takes up the profession of religion only to serve secular ends. This is not the meaning of the word in the book of Job, where it frequently occurs.

They cry not - "Though he binds them, yet they cry not." They are too obstinate to humble themselves even under the mighty hand of God.

JOB 36: 14 They die in youth. Their life perishes among the unclean.

Verse 14

They die in youth - Exactly what the psalmist says, "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days," Psa 55:23. Literally, the words of Elihu are, "They shall die in the youth of their soul."

Their life is among the unclean - בקדשים barkedeshim, among the whores, harlots, prostitutes, and sodomites. In this sense the word is used, though it also signifies consecrated persons; but we know that in idolatry characters of this kind were consecrated to Baal and Ashtaroth, Venus, Priapus, etc. Mr. Good translates the rabble. The Septuagint: Their life shalt be wounded by the angels.

JOB 36: 15 He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear in oppression.

Verse 15

And openeth their ears in oppression - He will let them know for what end they are afflicted, and why he permits them to be oppressed. The word יגל yigel might be translated he shall make them exult, or sing with joy, in oppression; like the three Hebrews in the burning fiery furnace.

JOB 36: 16 Yes, he would have allured you out of distress, into a broad place, where there is no restriction. That which is set on your table would be full of fatness.

Verse 16

Even so would he have removed thee - If thou hadst turned to, obeyed, and served him, thy present state would have been widely different from what it is.

JOB 36: 17 "But you are full of the judgement of the wicked. Judgement and justice take hold of you.

Verse 17

But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked - As thou art acting like the wicked, so God deals with thee as he deals with them. Elihu is not a whit behind Job's other friends. None of them seems to have known any thing of the permission given by God to Satan to afflict and torment an innocent man.

JOB 36: 18 Don't let riches entice you to wrath, neither let the great size of a bribe turn you aside.

Verse 18

Because there is wrath - This is a time in which God is punishing the wicked; take heed lest thou be cut off in a moment. Redeem the time; the days are evil.

Then a great ransom - When he determines to destroy, who can save?

JOB 36: 19 Would your wealth sustain you in distress, or all the might of your strength?

JOB 36: 20 Don't desire the night, when people are cut off in their place.

Verse 20

Desire not the night - Thou hast wished for death; (here called night); desire it not; leave that with God. If he hear thee, and send death, thou mayest be cut off in a way at which thy soul would shudder.

JOB 36: 21 Take heed, don't regard iniquity; for you have chosen this rather than affliction.

Verse 21

Regard not iniquity - It is sinful to entertain such wishes; it is an insult to the providence of God. He sends affliction; he knows this to be best for thee: but thou hast preferred death to affliction, thereby setting thy wisdom against the wisdom of God. Many in affliction, long for death; and yet they are not prepared to appear before God! What madness is this! If he takes them at their wish, they are ruined for ever. Affliction may be the means of their salvation; the wished-for death, of their eternal destruction.

JOB 36: 22 Behold, God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him?

Verse 22

God exalteth by his power - He has brought thee low, but he can raise thee up. Thou art not yet out of the reach of his mercy. Thy affliction is a proof that he acts towards thee as a merciful Parent. He knows what is best to be done; he teaches thee how thou shouldst suffer and improve. Why sin against his kindness? Who can teach like him?

JOB 36: 23 Who has prescribed his way for him? Or who can say, 'You have committed unrighteousness?'

Verse 23

Who hath enjoined him his way - Has God taken instructions from any man how he shall govern the world?

Thou hast wrought iniquity? - Who can prove, in the whole compass of the creation, that there is one thing imperfect, superabundant, or out of its place? Who can show that there is, in the course of

the Divine providence, one unrighteous, cruel, or unwise act? All the cunning and wickedness of man have never been able to find out the smallest flaw in the work of God.

JOB 36: 24 "Remember that you magnify his work, whereof men have sung.

Verse 24

Remember that thou magnify his work - Take this into consideration; instead of fretting against the dispensations of Divine providence, and quarrelling with thy Maker, attentively survey his works; consider the operation of his hands; and see the proofs of his wisdom in the plan of all, of his power in the production and support of all, and of his goodness in the end for which all have been made, and to which every operation in nature most obviously tends; and then magnify his work. Speak of him as thou shalt find; let the visible works of thy Maker prove to thee his eternal power and Godhead, and let nature lead thee to the Creator.

JOB 36: 25 All men have looked on it. Man sees it afar off.

Verse 25

Every man may see it - He who says he can examine the earth with a philosophic eye, and the heavens with the eye of an astronomer, and yet says he cannot see in them a system of infinite skill and contrivance, must be ignorant of science, or lie against his conscience, and be utterly unworthy of confidence or respect.

JOB 36: 26 Behold, God is great, and we don't know him. The number of his years is unsearchable.

Verse 26

God is great - He is omnipotent.

We know him not - He is unsearchable.

Neither can the number of his years be searched out - He is eternal.

These three propositions are an ample foundation for endless disquisition. As to paraphrase and comment, they need none in this place; they are too profound, comprehensive, and sublime.

JOB 36: 27 For he draws up the drops of water, which distil in rain from his vapour,

Verse 27

He maketh small the drops of water - This appears simply to refer to evaporation, and perhaps it would be better to translate יגַרַע yegara, "he exhales;" detaches the smallest particles of the aqueous mass from the surface in order to form clouds, as reservoirs for the purpose of furnishing rain for the watering of the earth. God is seen in little things, as well as great things; and the inconceivably little, as well as the stupendously great, are equally the work of Omnipotence.

They pour down rain - These exceedingly minute drops or vapor become collected in clouds; and then, when agitated by winds, etc. many particles being united, they become too heavy to be sustained by the air in which they before were suspended, and so fall down in rain, which is either a mist, a drizzle, a shower, a storm, or a waterspout, according to the influence of different winds, or the presence and quantum of the electric fluid. And all this is proportioned, יֵדוּל le-edo, "to its vapor," to the quantity of the fluid evaporated and condensed into clouds.

JOB 36: 28 Which the skies pour down and which drop on man abundantly.

Verse 28

Which the clouds do drop - In proportion to the evaporation will be the clouds or masses of volatilized and suspended vapor; and in proportion to this will be the quantum of rain which in different forms will fall upon the earth. There is a remarkable addition to this verse in the Septuagint. I shall insert the whole verse: Ῥυησονται παλαιωματα, εσκιασε δε νεφη επι αμυθητω βροτω· ωραν εθετο κτηνεσιν, οιδασι δε κοιτης ταξιν· επι τουτοις πασιν ουκ εξισταται σου η διανοια, ουδε διαλασσεται σου η καρδια απο σ ω μ α τ ο ς; "The rains descend, and the clouds cover with their shadows multitudes of men: he hath appointed to animals to know the order of their dwellings. At the contemplation of these things is not thy mind transported, and thy heart ready to part from thy body?"

JOB 36: 29 Yes, can any understand the spreading of the clouds, and the thunderings of his pavilion?

Verse 29

Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds - Though the vapor appear to be fortuitously raised, and subject, when suspended in the atmosphere, to innumerable accidents, to different winds and currents which might drive it all to the sandy deserts, or direct its course so that it should fall again into the great deep from which it has been exhaled, without watering and refreshing the earth; yet so does the good and wise providence of God manage this matter, that every part of the arable terrene surface receives an ample supply; and in every place, where requisite, it may be truly said that "The rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and water the earth, and cause it to bring forth and bud, that it may minister seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." In Egypt, where there is little or no rain, the earth is watered by the annual inundation of the Nile; there, because this system of evaporation is not necessary, it does not exist. Who can account for this economy? How are these clouds so judiciously and effectually spread through the atmosphere, so as to supply the wants of the earth, of men, and of cattle? I ask, with Elihu, "Who can understand the spreadings of these clouds?" And I should like to see that volunteer in the solution of paradoxes who would step forward and say, I am the man.

The noise of his tabernacle? - By the tabernacle we may understand the whole firmament or atmospheric expansion; the place where the Almighty seems more particularly to dwell; whence he sends forth the rain of his strength, and the thunder of his power. The noise must refer to the blowing of winds and tempests. or to the claps, peals, and rattling of thunder, by means of the electric fluid.

JOB 36: 30 Behold, he spreads his light around him. He covers the bottom of the sea.

Verse 30

He spreadeth his light upon it - Or, as Mr. Good translates, "He throweth forth from it his flash." These two verses may both have an allusion to the sudden rarefaction of that part of the atmosphere whence the thunder proceeds, by the agency of the electric fluid; the rushing in of the air on each side to restore the equilibrium, which the passage of the fire had before destroyed. The noise produced by this sudden rushing in of the air, as well as that occasioned by the ignition of the hydrogen gas, which is one of the constituents of water, is the thunder of his tabernacle, viz., the atmosphere, where God appears, in such cases, to be manifesting his presence and his power. Elihu says that God spreadeth his light upon it. This is spoken in reference to the flashes and coruscations of lightning in the time of thunder storms, when, even in a dark night, a sudden flash illuminates for a moment the surface of the earth under that place.

And covereth the bottom of the sea - He doth whatsoever it pleaseth him in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, in the sea, and in all deep places. Yea, the depths of the sea are as much under his control and influence as the atmosphere, and its whole collection of vapours, meteors, and galvanic and electric fluids.

JOB 36: 31 For by these he judges the people. He gives food in abundance.

Verse 31

By them judgeth he the people - He makes storms, tempests, winds, hurricanes, tornadoes, thunder and lightning, drought and inundation, the instruments of his justice, to punish rebellious nations.

He giveth meat in abundance - Though by these he punishes offenders, yet through the same, as instruments, he provides for the wants of men and animals in general. Storms, tempests, and hurricanes, agitate the lower regions of the atmosphere, disperse noxious vapours, and thus render it fit for respiration; and without these it would soon become a stagnant, putrid, and deadly mass, in which neither animals could live, nor vegetables thrive. And by dews, rains, snows, frosts, winds, cold, and heat, he fructifies the earth, and causes it to bring forth abundantly, so that every thing living is filled with plenteousness. Some critics translate this latter clause thus: - He passeth sentence amain. I cannot see this meaning in the original words. Not one of the versions has so understood them; nor does this translation, supposing even that the Hebrew would bear it, give so fine and so elegant an idea as that of the common version. I always feel reluctant to give a sense in any case that is not supported in some of its parts by any of the ancient versions, and more especially when it

is contrary to the whole of them; and still more particularly when opposed to the Arabic, which in the Book of Job, containing so many Arabisms, I consider to be of very great importance.

JOB 36: 32 He covers his hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark.

Verse 32

With clouds he covereth the light - This is all extraordinary saying, **על כפיים כמה אור**, *al cappayim kissah or*, which Mr. Good translates, "He brandisheth the blaze athwart the concave." The Vulgate, with which all the other versions less or more agree, has, *In manibus abscondit lucem*, "In his hands he hideth the light;" or, more literally, "By the hollow of his hands (**כפיים** *cappayim*) he concealeth the light, (**אור**, *or*;) the fountain of light, i.e., the Sun.

And commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt - I am afraid this is no translation of the original. Old Coverdale is better: - And at his commandement it commeth agayne; which is a near copy of the Vulgate. Here again Mr. Good departs from all the versions, both ancient and modern, by translating thus: - "And launcheth his penetrating bolt." Dr. Stock, in my opinion, comes nearer the original and the versions in his translation: - "And giveth charge as to what it shall meet."

The mending of the text by conjecture, to which we should only recur in desperate necessity, has furnished Mr. Good and Reiske with the above translation. For my own part, I must acknowledge an extreme difficulty both here and in the concluding verse, on which I am unwilling to lay a correcting hand. I think something of the doctrine of eclipses is here referred to; the defect of the solar light, by the interposition of the moon. So in the time of an eclipse God is represented as covering the body of the sun with the hollow of his hand, and thus obscuring the solar light, and then removing his hand so as to permit it to re-illuminate the earth.

Mr. Good gets his translation by dividing the words in a different manner from the present text. I shall give both: -

Hebrew: **ויצו עליה במפגיע**

Vayetsav aleyha bemaphgia

Mr. Good: **ויצוע ליהב מפגיע**

Veyezvo liahbe mapegio.

Of which he learnedly contends, "And launcheth his penetrating bolt," is the literal sense. The change here made, to produce the above meaning, is not a violent one; and I must leave the reader to judge of its importance.

JOB 36: 33 Its noise tells about him, and the livestock also concerning the storm that comes up.

Verse 33

The noise thereof showeth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapor - I think this translation very unhappy. I shall give each hemistich in the original: - **יגיד עליו רעו** -

מקנה אף על עולה על יגגיד
Yaggid alaiv reo על עולה על אף על עולה על יגגיד

Mikneh aph al oleh.

I think this may be translated without any violence to any word in the text: -

Its loud noise (or his thunder) shall proclaim concerning him;

A magazine of wrath against iniquity.

This is literal, and gives, in my opinion, a proper meaning of the passage, and one in strict connection with the context. And it is worthy of remark that every wicked man trembles at the noise of thunder and the flash of lightning, and considers this a treasury of Divine wrath, emphatically called among us the artillery of the skies; and whenever the noise is heard, it is considered the voice of God. Thus the thunder declares concerning him. The next chapter, which is a continuation of the subject here, confirms and illustrates this meaning. For יגגיד yaggid, Houbigant reads יניד yanid; and for מקנה mikneh, מקנאת mikkinath; and translates thus: "He agitates with himself his thunder, from the indignation of his wrath against iniquity."