Interlude on Wisdom (28)

- **Wisdom and Folly are Personified as Women**
  - **Wisdom** (Prov 1:20-33; 8:1 ff) Women may have a sense of perception, or degree of wisdom, which many men seem to lack. (Rebekah with Jacob & Esau (Gen 27), Abigail & Nabal (1 Sam 25). Women can bring much to their marriage, including a maturing or taming influence that enhances the man.
  - **Folly** (Pro 9:13) Lack of wisdom is also personified as a woman. “The woman of folly is boisterous, She is naive and knows nothing.” Folly is personified sin and is contrasted against wisdom.

- Whoever is willing to repent of their naïvetés are in a position to learn wisdom (Prov 9:4-6, 16-18).
Interlude on Wisdom (28)

• **Fear of YHWH leads to wisdom** - Wisdom for man is not only to make one humanly wise, but also to enable him to trust God (Job 28:28).
  - Wisdom leads to knowledge of the Holy One (Prov 9:10). So, men are to listen to the wisdom of God with attentive ears (Prov 2:2).
  - Inner happiness only comes when man attains this wisdom (Prov 3:13).
  - Wisdom is accessed through a strenuous search (Prov 2:4), not in nature, but a search for God himself (Prov 2:5).
  - Skeptics will never find this wisdom and will never know the full meaning of life (Prov 14:6ff).
  - In the great poem of Job 28, wisdom in this special biblical sense enables us to fully trust God in every circumstance.

Applications on Wisdom

• Wisdom exists only in complete fidelity to God’s word (Jas 3:14).
• Wisdom does not co-exist with a sinful lifestyle (Jas 3:15-16).
• Wisdom does not exist apart from good works and spiritual fruit (Jas 3:17-18).
• God is anxious to bestow wisdom upon those who ask (Jas 1:5-8).
• Grow in wisdom by studying the character of God as revealed in the Torah (Ps 19:7).
Job’s Final Monologue (29-31)

In the first chapter, Job made three summary statements, “YHWH has given, YHWH has taken away, blessed be the name of YHWH” (1:21). These three statements form the outline of Job’s concluding discourse, and nothing surfaced during the lengthy dialogues and debates with the three friends which debunked Job’s position.

1. YHWH Has Given - Job’s Past Honor and Blessing (29)
2. YHWH Has Taken Away - Job’s Present Dishonor and Suffering (30)
3. Blessed be the Name of YHWH - Job’s Negative Confession and Final Oath (31)
YHWH Has Given (29)

Job’s life was glorious until his time of testing came upon him and took away his glory.

- God blessed Job’s life at every step (29:1-6).
  - Job loved his family (29:5b-6).
- Job was highly respected among men (29:7-11).
  - Job enjoyed a good reputation in his community (29:7-10, 21-25).
- Job delivered the poor and the oppressed (29:12-17).
  - Eliphaz had previously criticized Job for profiting off of innocent people, taking advantage of their misfortune (22:6-9, 15-16). Job rebuts this criticism from personal experience.
  - Job had even put himself at great risk in order to defend the misfortunate against wicked men who preyed upon them (29:17).
- Job expected his pattern of life to continue to the end (29:18-20).
- Job was a comforter and a counselor to everyone (29:21-25).

YHWH Has Taken Away (30)

Job’s life is now a humiliating existence.

- Young men, and even the most worthless among them, now mock Job (30:1-15).
- Job has lost all sense of integrity (30:16-18).
- Job is in a state of disrepute (30:19).
- God has turned his back on Job (30:20-22).
- Job knows that God has appointed him to die (30:23) [cf. Job’s Profession of Faith (19:25-27)].
- There is nobody like Job anywhere, who will help him during his own time of great need (30:24-31).
Blessed Be The Name of YHWH (31)

**Job’s Negative Confession and Final Oath (31:1–40)**

- Job asserts his integrity.
- Job has followed not only the letter of the Law, but also the spirit of the Law. He has lived by the Tenth Commandment. He had made a “covenant with his eyes.” He understood one practical application was not to “gaze at,” (*bin*, בִּין) (“to perceive, to give heed to”) a “virgin” (*bethulah*, בְּתוּלָה) (31:1). First use of “virgin” in the Bible.
- Yet in spite of this, God has allowed calamity to come upon him, the “unjust” (31:2-3).
- Surely God has observed Job’s sanctified manner of life (31:4-7).

Blessed Be The Name of YHWH (31)

- Job’s self-imprecation (31:8-28).
- Job has enthusiastically obeyed God and loved his fellow man (31:29-32).
- Job affirms his justification (31:33-34).
  - Job believes in the literal person Adam, but additionally, in the original sin of Adam. 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”
  - Job has not hidden his sin, as Adam did, but confessed it (31:33).
    - He has not avoided people who might know something about a sin of his (31:34).
    - He has confessed his sin to God (1:5), and has lived a sanctified life (1:1).
- Job pleads for a hearing before God (31:35-40).
Job’s Negative Confession (31)

Job’s words in chapter 31 contain the elements or formal characteristics of a negative confession:

• Conditional clause that denies Job committed a sin (Job 31:9)
• Self-imprecation (calling down a curse) if it were true (Job 31:10)
• Explanation as to why he would never commit such an act (Job 31:11-12)
• The conditional clauses are the behavior which Job denies, totaling 14, which mathematically is 2 x 7. The number seven in Scripture seems to convey the general idea of fullness or completion. The number 14 may signify just how thoroughly Job has evaluated and reevaluated his innocence. Ref: John J. Davis, Biblical Numerology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968), 154.

Job’s Negative Confession (31)

1. Lust (31:1)
2. Fraud, lying, deceit (31:5-6)
3. Covetousness (31:7-8)
4. Adultery (31:9-12)
6. Lack of compassion (31:16-18) – related to hunger
7. Lack of compassion (31:19-20) – related to nakedness
8. Legal abuse of the poor (31:21-23), containing the full form [If ... then ...]
9. Miserly conduct (31:24-25)
10. Idolatry, worship of astral deities (31:26-28)
11. Rejoicing over the suffering of an enemy (Schadenfreude) (31:29-30)
12. Inhospitality, lack of charity to travelers (31:31-32)
13. Hypocrisy (31:33-37). If this were true, Job is willing to embrace the punishment.
14. Wrongful accumulation of other peoples’ land (31:38-40)
Observations

A few observations can be made of Job's negative confession:

- **Relevant to Job.** Job focuses on offenses that a man in his position might be expected to commit. The majority are applicable to someone who has power and money.

- **Applicable to Job.** Nothing said about sins he would probably not have committed (for example, Proverbs 1:11-19 warns against joining a criminal gang. This wouldn’t have been a temptation to someone in Job’s position).

- **Fear of God.** Job continually feared God & turned from evil (31:23).

- **Virtue.** Focus on positive acts of virtue. Many of Job’ behaviors are positive things he did. This debunks the theory that the OT condemns negative behavior only (for example, there is no penalty in the Torah for violating the Tenth Commandment).

- **Sober-minded.** Throughout chapter 31, Job comes across as sober-minded, firm, and resolute. His tone is not angry or defiant.

Applications on Wisdom

- Chapter 31 is the portrait of a “blameless and upright” life, consistent in every way with YHWH’s assessment of Job (1:1, 1:8).

- Job assumed suffering was always connected with personal sin.

- Point of fact, that never was the issue, he was never being punished for sin. Job didn’t know of the discussion between God and Satan in the prologue, therefore he was ignorant of the context of his suffering and reasons for it. In the prologue God never accused Job of sinning, in fact God accused Job of righteousness. In 31:37, Job wishes to approach God like a prince, which is his way of saying he hasn’t been a hypocrite.
Elihu (32-37)

- Elihu means “He is my God.”
- Elihu made a sudden appearance at this point in the book in order to give four speeches (chaps. 32-37). Within these four speeches are two main points:
  - God disciplines a person to turn him from the error of his ways.
  - God governs justly without exception.
- Elihu’s role has been the subject of disagreement among scholars. Some say Elihu offers no new insight or viewpoint not previously covered. Within this group, some even reject outright the idea that this section belongs in the Bible. Since Elihu is never even mentioned outside of chapters 32-27, a case can be made that the book of Job is quite compelling without him. Others say Elihu has nothing new to say, which is the very reason his speeches belong in the book, i.e., to underscore the fact that human reasoning has been completely exhausted. Other scholars believe Elihu’s speeches are the central message of the book of Job, even more than the speeches of YHWH. (Ref: Andersen)
Elihu (32-37)

Elihu is not called a “friend” as are Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. The three are called “friends” in the prologue, the epilogue, by Job himself and by God (2:11; 19:21; 42:7, 10). Elihu is set apart in this way and may function as a forerunner of God.

The content of his speeches attack Job’s claim of being “righteous in his own eyes” (32:1). Apart from God’s appraisal of Job as one who was “blameless and upright” (1:1, 8; 2:3), Elihu objected to Job’s persistent justification of his own self-righteousness (tsadeq, צָדֵק). In this context, Elihu may serve as a type of mediator on behalf of God (36:2). In general, Elihu addresses three main topics:

- Rebuking the three friends,
- Suggesting that Job needed to repent of his pride, and
- Recommending that Job should exalt God's works and fear Him.

(Ref: Hartley)

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Elihu (32-37)

- Elihu’s three basic points are either assumed or developed further by YHWH in His monologue (chaps. 38-41).
- In the previous disputations, Job’s friends implied his guilt for personal sin, while Job’s response hinted that God was unjust by not revealing the reason that Job was suffering.
- The literary structure takes a turn at this point toward a focus on Job’s relationship with God and God’s expectations. Final reconciliation between Job and God occurs at the end of the book.

Elihu’s Introduction (32:1-5)

- In his introductory paragraph in 32:1-5, Elihu is angry at Job’s self-justification.
- Elihu didn’t take exception to Job’s justification before God, but felt that it was wrong for him to promote it, and instead Job should wait for God to justify him.
- This seems to be Job’s sin of “pride” (gevah, גּוָה) (33:17; 35:12). Pride is the primary thing that stands in the way of man’s relationship to God (Jer 13:17), therefore God is at work to remove it. Elihu introduces pride for the first time in the book (33:17; 35:12).
- God later explains that pride is personified in the character of creatures such as Leviathan (41:15, 34).

Elihu’s First Speech (32:6-33:33)

Part 1 (32:6–22)
- While Elihu is a self-proclaimed subject matter expert, he in fact identifies a number of issues that Job and his friends have missed.
- In stark contrast to the lack of courtesy exhibited by the three friends, Elihu respectfully requests permission to address Job’s situation (32:20; 33:1).
- Elihu prefaces his remarks with three main points:
  - Wisdom comes from God, not from old age (32:6-10).
  - The three friends have failed Job (32:11-16).
  - Elihu has much to say and wants to be heard (32:17-22).
Comment: Some people have something to say, others just have to say something.
Elihu’s First Speech (32:6-33:33)

Part 2 (33:1–33)

- Elihu addresses only Job in the first speech (33:1-7). All of the “you” pronouns are singular throughout chapter 33.
  - Elihu says he is upright, as Job is, and not like the three friends (33:6).
  - Elihu reveals that he and Job are in good standing before God. Evidently the three friends do not enjoy this relationship.
  - Elihu is not a theophany or an angel, he is a human being, as is Job (33:6-7).
- Elihu quotes Job’s own words in 33:8-11, setting the stage for his critique of Job and the three friends’ arguments.
- Elihu says Job was wrong to have made any demands on God, in particular, Job’s insistence on a hearing to defend himself to God (33:12-13).

Elihu’s First Speech (32:6-33:33)

Part 2 (33:1–33)

- Elihu enumerates God’s redemptive means and methods:
  - God uses gentle appeals to quell man’s pride (33:17) and stimulate humility (33:14-18).
  - When gentle appeals fail, God uses affliction to chasten man’s pride (33:19-22).
  - God may send a gracious mediator who can lead man to God (33:23-26).
- God wants repentance from prideful men (33:26-28).
- God employs all of the methods above (1, 2, 3).
- Elihu has yet more to say (33:31-33).
Elihu’s Second Speech (34)

• Elihu now turns his attention to the three friends, addressing them in the plural “you” throughout chapter 34.
• He analyzes the propositions which Job put to the three friends (34:1-4).
  – Verse 3 is quoted from 12:11
  – In verse 4, Elihu assures them he is right but they are wrong.
• Elihu quotes some of Job’s and the friends’ previous propositions (34:5-9) (cf. 6:4; 9:22; 21:7-34; 27:2;)
• Yet God makes all the rules, and men don’t. God doesn’t owe any man an explanation for what He does (34:10-20). It is not man’s place to despise his lot in life, neither should one man partiality to the great and mighty on the one hand, or criticize them on the other (34:16-20).
• In particular, God doesn’t owe Job an explanation for what has been happening to him (34:21-25).

Elihu’s Second Speech (34)

• In some instances, God may wish to remove a wicked tribal leader in order to deal directly with that tribe (34:26-32). Job was a tribal leader. This might have application to him and his tribe (29:25).
  – In regard to taking action in man’s affairs, God may remain anonymous (34:29).
  – There are some benefits in removing a wicked tribal leader (34:30).
    • Wicked leaders may not seek repentance from God (34:31-32).
• God doesn’t owe Job a hearing (34:33-35). All men have sufficient revelation of God to make an informed decision to live according to God’s holy standard, and those who demand greater revelation will not be given it. They must make choices on the basis of what has been revealed to them (34:32-34).
• God may even condemn Job for making such demands upon Him (34:36-37).
Elihu’s Third Speech (35)

- In chapter 35, Elihu returns to his discussion with Job, using the singular “you.”
- Demanding answers from God is equivalent to usurping God, or attempting to re-define righteousness (35:1-3).
- Job’s present condition has caused him to doubt God’s justice, and to wonder what profit there was in refraining from sin against God. In 35:3, Elihu paraphrases Job’s earlier statement to that effect (9:29-31).
- Man’s sins don’t damage to God, and man’s righteousness doesn’t add anything to God (35:4-9).
- If men seek God at all, it is not from pure motives (35:10-11).
- God doesn’t answer impure or proud petitions (35:12), He acts on His own timetable (35:12-16).

Elihu’s Fourth Speech (36-37)

- Elihu continues to speak to Job, using the singular “you” in chapters 36-37.
- Elihu still has more to say (36:1-4).
- God does indeed operate by reward-retribution (36:5-9).
- But God also applies grace and extends blessing to anyone who repents (36:10-11).
- On the other hand, God judges those who reject His grace (36:12-14).
- Furthermore, God delivers the afflicted, independent of their good works, during a time of suffering, and then blesses them abundantly (36:15-16).
Elihu’s Fourth Speech (36-37)

- Elihu warns against scoffing at the wicked or engaging in *Schadenfreude*, which is evil (36:17-21; cf. 22:19).
- Men cannot sit in judgment over God (36:22-23).
- Men should rather exalt God’s work (24:33).
- God’s work is purposeful (36:31).
- God’s work reveals what He is doing on earth (36:33).
  - Even cattle know this (36:33).
- It excites Elihu just to behold God’s work (37:1-13), because he knows that God is always doing great things (37:5).

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Elihu’s Fourth Speech (36-37)

- Elihu challenges Job to consider that his difficult circumstances fall under the umbrella of God’s work (37:14-18). Elihu uses interrogatory in a similar way that God does in chapters 38-41.
- In view of God’s superiority and greatness, man can’t even begin to organize a coherent complaint to present to God (37:19-20).
- Men should simply behold the splendor of God’s great work, and live in awe and fear of Him (37:21-24).