

21:7-16 The wicked are not punished

1. Malbim, Introduction to Chapter 21

לא כמ"ש אליפז שהרשעים מלאים פחד תמיד ואינם בוטחים בהצלחתם, כי נמצאו רשעים בוטחים ושלוים (ט' י' א), ולא תשובת בלדד שיכרת מינם ושאריתם המיני והאישי, כי נמצאו רשעים שבניהם חיים ומצליחים (ח'), וביתם מתקיים זמן רב (כ' - כ"ט)...

It is not as Eliphaz said, that the wicked are filled with perpetual fear and they do not trust their own success, for wicked people who are secure and at peace are to be found (21:9-11). It is not as Bildad replied, that their species and its species-wide or personal remnant will be cut off, for wicked people whose children live and thrive are to be found (21:8), and their house endures for a long time (21:20-29)...

2. Carol Newsom, The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations, page 162

To hear it simply as parodic play with a familiar topos is not quite accurate. It misses part of Job's rhetorical strategy. Job does not begin his utterance in strict imitation of the friends. They begin with declarative statements, Job with the question "Why?" Job thus sets his speech in relation to another genre, the psalmic complaint, where objections to the prosperity of the wicked were a traditional topic (eg., Psalms 10; 73). But as with Job's evocation of the lament tradition in chapter 16, so here, too, it is employed as a setup, which depends for its effectiveness upon the expectation of a patterned sequence of ideas that Job disrupts....

3. Talmud, Sanhedrin 108a

דור המבול לא נתגאו אלא בשביל טובה שהשפיע להם הקב"ה, ומה כתיב בהם? "בתייהם שלום מפחד ולא שבט אלוך עליהם" ... אמרו, "כלום צריכין אנו לו אלא לטיפה של גשמים? יש לנו נהרות ומעינות שאנו מסתפקין מהן!" אמר הקב"ה, "בטובה שהשפעתו להן בה מכעיסין אותי, ובה אני דן אותם," שנאמר "ואני הנני מביא את המבול מים. (בראשית ו:יז)"

The generation of the flood were arrogant only because of the good which Gd flowed upon them. And what is written regarding them? "Their house is at peace from fear, and the rod of Gd is not upon them"... They said, "Do we need Him for anything other than a drop of rain? We have rivers and streams from which we fill our needs!" Gd replied, "They anger Me with the good that I have flowed upon them, and with this I will punish them," as Bereishit 6:17 says, "And I [in response to them], behold, I will bring upon them a flood of water."

21:17-26 Don't bring proof from cases where the wicked suffer

4. Examples of the Psalmic Complaint

- Psalms 10:1-11 10:12-18
- Psalms 73:4-16 73:17-28

5. Carol Newsom, The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations, page 163

From verse 7 through verse 15 in chapter 21, Job's speech says nothing that would be out of place in the psalms, and in a conventional psalm verse 16 would serve as the beginning of the psalmist's reply to his own doubts... Here is the parody. Job pays homage to the convention of implicit dialogue, but he turns it into a real one... Job's insistence on an accounting exposes what iconic narratives repress, that is, that they are the product of highly selective perception.

6. Metzudat David to 21:17

הנה ראיתי רשעים רבים יבלו בטוב ימיהם. ואם ימצאו רשעים מדוכאים, כמה הם במספר?

I have seen many wicked people wearing out their days in bounty. And if lowly wicked people are found, how many?

7. Metzudat David to 21:19

ואם במה שאלוק מטמין לבניו גמול עון הגזל שאנס בכחו, הלא מהראוי היה שאליו בעצמו ישלם גמול הרעה, וידע כי יש אלקים שופטים בארץ:

If Gd stores for his children the payback for the thefts he took by force, it would have been more appropriate that He pay back his evil to him directly, so that he would know that there is a judging Gd in the land.

21:27-28 Suffering is not proof of wickedness

8. Trial by ordeal 16:7-8, 20:27

9. Wikipedia, Trial by Ordeal

Trial by ordeal was an ancient judicial practice by which the guilt or innocence of the accused was determined by subjecting them to an unpleasant, usually dangerous experience. Classically, the test was one of life or death and the proof of innocence was survival. In some cases, the accused was considered innocent if they escaped injury or if their injuries healed.

10. Sotah Bamidbar 5:11-31 - Three differences?

11. Code of Hammurabi 131-132

131. If a man bring a charge against one's wife, but she is not surprised with another man, she must take an oath and then may return to her house.

132. If the "finger is pointed" at a man's wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for her husband.

21:29-34 Everyone knows that wicked people thrive

Tzofar's First Speech (11)	Job's Reply (12-14)
Gd knows more, and punishes according to information that only Gd has	Gd is indeed the greatest, and source of all destruction You are misrepresenting Gd; I am the pious one
Prescription: Repent and approach Gd! Then your turmoil will end	My case against Gd: I am no sinner Paying attention to my lowly sins is not worthy of You I am here today, gone tomorrow

Tzofar's Second Speech (20)	Job's Reply (21)
Personal attacks: You and your children are being punished	Personal response: Prepare to be shocked!
The wicked bring it upon themselves with their appetites Heaven and Earth turn on the wicked	Do not claim to prove wickedness from suffering The wicked do not suffer; there is no Divine justice

Introducing Chapter 22

Eliphaz's First Speech (4-5)	Job's Reply (6-7)
People deserve their suffering	I never asked for your help
Outrage is foolish	Gd has smashed me, or allowed me to be smashed
Turn to Gd for help	Gd has forced my outrage
	There is no hopeful narrative; I turn to Gd in defiance

Eliphaz's Second Speech (15)	Job's Reply (16-17)
Job, you wickedly deny the value of goodness!	Stop judging me!
Job, you are arrogant!	
The wicked suffer psychologically and lack a future	-
	Gd has become my enemy; I suffer greatly; I demand justice from Gd

Outline of Chapter 22

- 22:1-4 Introduction: Gd owes you nothing, and has no reason to deign to debate you
- 22:5-14 Here's a list of your three sins: Harming vulnerable; Injustice; Heresy
- 22:15-20 Wicked people like you have always been punished
- 22:21-30 Recant and repent, and Gd will accept you back