

Job 35:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee.

Analysis

I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee—Elihu directly addresses Job and indirectly the three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar). The verb shiv (שִׁיבָּה), 'to answer' or 'to respond,' indicates Elihu's confidence in providing what the others couldn't—satisfying explanation of Job's suffering. The phrase reeka (רְקִיכָּה), 'your companions,' acknowledges the failed counselors.

Elihu's youthful boldness claims ability to answer what confounded his elders. This represents either admirable courage or presumptuous pride—the text's ambiguity forces readers to judge. His subsequent argument (verses 5-8) emphasizes God's transcendence: human sin cannot harm God, nor human righteousness benefit Him. Therefore, Job's claim to deserve better treatment misconstrues the divine-human relationship.

Elihu's answer contains truth—God's aseity (self-existence) means He needs nothing from creatures. Yet this truth incompletely addresses Job's situation. God's transcendence doesn't negate His covenant faithfulness or diminish the problem of innocent suffering. Later, God will vindicate Job's protest over the friends' false accusations (42:7), suggesting Elihu's answer, while theologically accurate regarding divine transcendence, misses the relational dimension of covenantal suffering.

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern wisdom dialogues, younger speakers typically deferred to elders. Elihu's assertiveness (32:6-10) breaks convention, claiming inspiration beyond aged wisdom. His mediating position—criticizing both Job's self-justification and the friends' false accusations—attempts synthesis of opposing views, a common wisdom literature technique.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do we balance theological correctness with relational sensitivity when counseling the afflicted?
2. What does Elihu's confidence in answering what stumped his elders teach about humility and presumption in theological discourse?
3. When is emphasizing God's transcendence helpful, and when does it inappropriately distance God from human suffering?

Interlinear Text

עָמָד אָנָשִׁים אֶת מֶלֶךְ רְשָׁיִם תְּמִימָן:
H589 I will answer H4405 H853 thee and thy companions H7453 H5973

Additional Cross-References

Job 34:8 (Parallel theme): Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men.

Proverbs 13:20 (Parallel theme): He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

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