

Job 35:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou.

Analysis

Look unto the heavens, and see (הִבֵּט שָׁמַיִם וְרָאָה, habbet shamayim ur-eh)—The imperative habbet (הִבֵּט), from nabat (נָבַט), means 'to look intently' or 'to gaze upon.' Shamayim (שָׁמַיִם), 'heavens,' evokes cosmic scale and divine dwelling. **Behold the clouds which are higher than thou** (וְנִשּׁוּר שְׁחָקִים גְּבוּהוּ מִמֶּךָ, ve-shur shechakim gavehu mimekka)—shechakim (שְׁחָקִים) means 'clouds' or 'skies,' from shachaq (שָׁחַק), 'to rub away' or 'pulverize,' suggesting dust-like cloud particles.

Elihu employs creation pedagogy—directing Job's eyes upward to recognize creaturely limitation versus Creator transcendence. This method anticipates God's own teaching strategy in chapters 38-41, suggesting Elihu grasps correct pedagogical approach even if his conclusions remain incomplete. The heavens' height establishes metaphor for divine transcendence and human finitude.

This argument cuts two ways: it humbles human presumption (Job cannot command God's attention based on merit) but also risks distancing God from covenant relationship. Psalm 8 similarly begins by observing the heavens' grandeur, then marvels that God regards humanity at all ('what is man, that thou art mindful of him?'). Elihu emphasizes transcendence; the psalmist adds divine condescension. Both truths require holding in tension.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cosmology envisioned a three-tiered universe: heavens above, earth in the middle, waters beneath. Clouds occupied the liminal space between human realm and divine dwelling. Observing celestial phenomena as theological instruction appears throughout wisdom literature (Psalm 19, Isaiah 40:26), making Elihu's pedagogical move culturally resonant.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does contemplating creation's vastness both humble us and draw us into worship?
2. What is the proper balance between affirming God's transcendence and experiencing His immanent presence?
3. When observing the heavens, do you primarily feel distance from God or wonder at His care for finite creatures?

Interlinear Text

הִבֵּט	שָׁמַיִם	וַיֵּרֶא	וְשָׁרָא	שְׁמַיִם	גְּבוּהֵי
Look	unto the heavens	and see	and behold	the clouds	which are higher
H5027	H8064	H7200	H7789	H7834	H1361

מִמֶּנֶּה׃
H4480

Additional Cross-References

Job 22:12 (Parallel theme): Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!

Isaiah 55:9 (Parallel theme): For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Nahum 1:3 (Parallel theme): The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

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