

Job 36:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?

Analysis

Who hath enjoined him his way? (מִי־פָקַד עָלָיו דַּרְכּוֹ, mi-fakad alav darko)—Elihu transitions from warning to exalting God's sovereignty. The verb paqad (to appoint, command, oversee) appears in questions demanding the answer 'No one!' God requires no supervisor or advisor. His derek (way, path, manner) needs no outside direction. This echoes Isaiah 40:13: 'Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?' Romans 11:34 quotes this, marveling at God's inscrutable wisdom.

Or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? (וּמִי־אָמַר פָּעַלְתָּ עוֹלָה, u-mi amar pa'alta avlah)—The verb amar (to say, declare) with pa'al (to do, work, accomplish) and avlah (unrighteousness, injustice) poses a rhetorical question: who dares accuse God of wrongdoing? Elihu suggests Job's complaints come dangerously close to this blasphemy. Yet the book's conclusion vindicates Job's protests as honest lament, while condemning the friends' false certainties (42:7). God can handle our questions—what He cannot abide is speaking falsely about Him to defend Him (13:7-8).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern monarchs claimed absolute sovereignty and accountability to none. Elihu applies this principle infinitely higher to God—the King of the universe requires no permission, answers to no counsel, and cannot be charged with wrongdoing. This radical monotheism distinguished Israel's theology from

polytheistic systems where gods could be questioned, manipulated, or held accountable.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do we balance honest lament and questioning with maintaining reverence for God's sovereignty?
2. What's the difference between accusing God of wrongdoing and wrestling with difficult theodicy questions?
3. How does God's absolute sovereignty comfort us even when we don't understand His ways?

Interlinear Text

מִי	פָּקַד	עַל	דֶּרֶךְ	וּמִי	אֵל מֵרָא
H4310	Who hath enjoined	H5921	him his way	H4310	or who can say
	H6485		H1870		H559
פָּעַלְתָּ	עוֹלָה:				
Thou hast wrought	iniquity				
H6466	H5766				

Additional Cross-References

Job 8:3 (Parallel theme): Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?

1 Corinthians 2:16 (Parallel theme): For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Job 34:10 (Sin): Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.

Ephesians 1:11 (Parallel theme): In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Romans 2:5 (Parallel theme): But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Romans 11:34 (Parallel theme): For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?