

TWO MILITARY METAPHORS IN ELIHU'S FOURTH SPEECH (JOB 36:19–20)

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ABSTRACT

This article suggests that the difficulties associated with the interpretation of Job 36:19–20 stem from the misconception that these verses are an elaboration of v. 18b, and refer to Job's potentially misguided notions: his reliance on wealth, pleading, salvation, etc. Accordingly, commentators usually understood שׁוֹעֵף as meaning “your cry for help, your wealth”. The reading שׁוֹעֵף, and its meaning “your noble, your potentate”, has been ignored, whether intentionally or not. It is shown in this study that if such a reading and sense are admitted, a simple coherent text can be obtained in which Elihu tries to advise Job on what his attitude toward God should be, using military metaphors and terminology. The metaphors in vv. 19–20, relating to daytime and night-time military operations, fit contextually the list of warnings in vv. 18–21, but are focused on misdirection and confusion. Elihu advises Job that in his complaints, like any commander, he should have a clear target, and not look for surprising moves, which might cause more surprise to him than to his opponent.

INTRODUCTION

Job 36:16–20 occurs in the first part of Elihu's fourth speech (Job 36–37), which deals with God's righteousness in managing human affairs. It reads and is typically translated thus:

19. Will your limitless wealth avail you,	הִיֶּעֱרֶךְ שׁוֹעֵף לֹא בָצָר
All your powerful efforts?	וְכָל מְאֻמְצֵי־כַחַךְ
20. Do not long for the night	אַל־תִּשְׁאַף הַלַּיְלָה
When peoples vanish where they are.	לְעֹלוֹת עַמִּים תִּהְיֶה

The unit consisting of vv. 16–20 is generally considered very difficult. Good (1990:150) observed, “More than one commentator has remarked on the near unintelligibility of these verses [vv. 16–20]. I find each sentence relatively

understandable in itself, but perceiving how they go together in a sensible sequence is another matter.” Indeed, Pope (1986:270) notes in his commentary that:

These verses are so difficult that many critics omit them in despair. CCD leaves a blank and gives in the notes a translation of the Vulgate which makes scarcely more sense than the MT.¹ With the reader warned of the uncertainty, we attempt a translation omitting elaborate discussion of detail.

Kissane (1939:246) says,

The text of the rest of this section [vv. 16–20] is so corrupt that many critics have given it up in despair (cf. Dhorme). The most widely divergent translations may be found in the works of commentators, many of which are difficult to reconcile with the general theme of the section.

In Andersen’s (1976:261–262) view this strophe (vv. 16–20), in the singular, seems to be addressed to Job. However, he finds that:

The text is full of problems, so that even its form (accusation, warning, encouragement?) is not clear. It lacks concreteness, and this is a handicap. ... Because the problems are insoluble, we shall illustrate by a few examples how divergent the translation can be.

Ehrlich (1968:323) simply gives up on translating vv. 16–20. He says,

die fünf folgenden Verse sind für mich undeutbar. Haarsträubend ist das Hebräisch, wovon die verschiedenen von den Erklärern an dieser Stelle vorgenommenen Emendationen Proben geben. So muss z. B. V. 19 nach Bickell לֹא בָצַר לְכָל הַיְעָרָה שׁוֹעֵר לּוֹ לָאֵלֹהִים lauten und dieses wiedergegeben werden: kann dein ‘Schreien ihm vorgelegt werden, der allen Kraftanstrengungen unzugänglich ist? Duhm wieder emendiert V. 20 in אֵל תִּשְׁאַף הַלְלוֹת לְעֵלוֹת

¹ CCD = Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Pope refers to the Catholic Bible translated under the auspices of the CCD between 1941 and 1969. It was supplanted in 1970 by the New American Bible and is no longer in widespread use.

עם מִתְהַכֵּם, und das Boll heissen: nicht beträge dich die Torheit, dich zu erheben mit dem, der sich weise dänkt.

Similarly Yellin (1926:76) says with regard to vv. 16–20: “A set of senseless verses” (שורה שלמה של פסוקים בלתי מובנים). He does not attempt to interpret them.

The purpose of this paper is to provide for vv. 19–20 a thematic framework, which is drawn from the domain of ancient military tactics, for explaining the MT. Within this framework, generally accepted dicta of military warfare serve as metaphors for Job’s confrontation with God. Using specific cases of military practice the author concretises Elihu’s warnings and imbues them with a sense of potential repercussions.

ANALYSIS

The translations/interpretations of Job 36:19–20 by the ancient versions and a representative sample of modern exegesis will now be considered. This analysis will illustrate the difficulties that the translators and exegetes faced, how they tried to overcome them, and the weaknesses of these efforts. It will also give guidance on the critical elements in the verses.

Ancient versions

Even a cursory reading of the interpretations that the ancient versions provided for vv. 19–20 reveals that these verses presented them with significant challenges. For instance, the Septuagint (Brenton, 1987:692) seems to be reaching out to an idea presented in v. 15 for understanding v. 19, changes a negative statement into a positive one, and connects half of the verse with the following verse. It has for Job 36:19–20: “19. Let not *thy* mind willingly turn thee aside from the petition of the feeble that are in distress. 20. And draw not forth all the mighty *men* by night, so that the people should go up instead of them” (19. Μή σε ἐκκλινάτω ἐκὼν ὁ νοῦς δεήσεως ἐν ἀνάγκη

ὄντων ἀδυνάτων καὶ πάντας τοὺς κραταιοῦντας ἰσχίῃ² 20. μὴ ἐξελεύσῃς τὴν νύκτα τοῦ ἀναβῆναι λαοσ ἀντ’ αὐτῶν ἀλλὰ φύλαξαι μὴ πράξῃς ἄτοπα).³

In v. 19, Septuagint is very paraphrastic, providing no help to commentators that try to restore the Ur-text. Dhorme (1967:547) finds that: “ἐκὼν ὁ νοῦς δεήσεως ἐν ἀνάγκῃ ὄντων ἀδυνάτων seems to make the negative ἄλ belong to the 2nd hemistich, for δεήσεως ἐν ἀνάγκῃ translates only שוע בצר. How has היעריך produced ἐκὼν ὁ νοῦς?” A closer inspection of the Septuagint’s interpretation shows that it takes ἡἷῃ = “willingly you” (ἐκὼν ὁ νοῦς), ἡἷῃ = “petition” (δεήσεως), and ἡἷῃ = “in distress” (ἀνάγκῃ). Beer (1897: 228) notes that MT v. 19b is apparently assumed to mean “feeble” (καὶ πάντας τοὺς κραταιοῦντας ἰσχίῃ). In v. 20 Septuagint has ἡἷῃ = “draw not forth” (μὴ ἐξελεύσῃς) and ἡἷῃ = “instead of them” (ἀντ’ αὐτῶν). These significations have no support in the Tanak. Moreover, they do not result in a coherent text for v. 20.

Though the Targum has a variant for each verse, neither of the versions makes sense. This can be seen from the following rendition of Job 36:19–20 (Mangan 1991:79): “19. Is it possible that your petition should be set forth in time of anger, or all those who are strong find strength? 20. Do not remove yourself in the night, having the people go up in their place”; i.e.,

19. האפשר דמסתד רבעותך וכל דמתאלמין משכחין חילא⁴

20. לא תדחוק בלילה לאסקא עממעיה באתריהון⁵

These translations are *prima facie* evidence that the Targumist had no idea what these biblical verses meant.

² The verse καὶ πάντας τοὺς κραταιοῦντας ἰσχίῃ does not exist in the extant manuscripts of the Septuagint and is absent in the Sahidic version. The present text was supplanted from Theodotion.

³ Verse 20 does not exist in the extant manuscripts of the Septuagint and is absent in the Sahidic version. The present text was supplanted from Theodotion.

⁴ Another version has: האפשר דמסדר צלותך לא בעקתא וכל מה דמתקפין כח מדבקין חילא (Is it possible that your prayer be proffered without difficulty, and all those who are strong in strength, will they gain vigor?).

⁵ Another version has: לא תגיר אתת חברך בלילה לסלקא עמיא חלופיהון (Do not seduce the wife of your neighbor in the night, having the peoples go upon their behalf).

The Peshitta does not make any more sense than the Targum. It translates our verses (Lamsa 1933:583): “19. He shall join you, that he may deliver you; you shall not be distressed by any of those who are mighty in power. 20. He shall deliver you from those who drive you away in the night, and give peoples for your sake, and the nations for your life.”

Peshitta’s paraphrase of v. 19 cannot be anchored in MT. Peshitta seems to understand שׁוֹעֵד as being derived from the root ישע, joins לֹא בָצָר to the second hemistich, and reads מכל instead of MT וכל. Finally, the translation of v. 20 is an expanded paraphrase of the MT with some repetition. It renders אֶל־תִּשְׁאַף הַלַּיְלָה by “He shall deliver you from those who drive you away in the night”, which cannot be anchored in the MT, and translates twice עַמִּים תִּתְּתֶם.

According to the Douay-Rheims translation, the Vulgate reads: [19] Lay down thy greatness without tribulation, and all the mighty of strength. [20] Prolong not the night that people may come up for them (19. *depone magnitudinem tuam absque tribulatione et omnes robustos fortitudine*. 20. *ne protrahas noctem ut ascendant populi pro eis*).⁶ It is difficult to anchor this translation in the MT.

Dhorme (1967:548) notes that in v. 19 “Vulgate’s *depone magnitudinem tuam absque tribulatione* treats היַעֲרֵךְ as an imperative, and connects שׁוֹעֵד with the same root as שׁוֹעֵד of 34:19.” In the second hemistich the Vulgate seems to be reading אַמִּיצִי “mighty” (*robustos*) instead of MT מִאֲמִיצִי. Finally, Vulgate takes אֶל־תִּשְׁאַף הַלַּיְלָה = “Prolong not the night” (*ne protrahas noctem*), which assigns תִּשְׁאַף the unattested meaning “prolong.” Also, the meaning “for them” (*pro eis*) for תִּתְּתֶם does not occur in the Tanak.

The variations between the versions do not indicate that they translated from a different *Vorlage* than the MT. However, it is obvious that they struggled with the thematic coherence of the text before them, resorting to expanded paraphrases that are not supported by the text. Worse, none of the paraphrases provides an understanding that is an improvement over the literal MT.

⁶ According to Caspari (1893:104–105) Hyronymus translates: 19. *non te auertat uoluntas animi a precibus infirmorum, cum in necessitate fuerint. et omnes qui habent fortitudinem*, 20. *noli extrahere per noctem, ut as Gendant populi pro eis*.

Modern exegesis

Verses 19–20 continued to be enigmatic in modern times. Many modern commentators consider vv. 16–20 as being Elihu’s words of encouragement to Job. Gordis (1978: 415) suggests that the general sense of the passage is:

Job has been saved from affliction, and actually has been granted prosperity (v. 16). Nonetheless, he has not practiced justice for the weak against the evildoer (v. 17). Elihu warns Job against letting his wealth lead him astray (v. 18) in the mistaken belief that his possessions will safeguard him against punishment (v. 19).

It is notable that Gordis omits v. 20 from this flow of thematic logic. We shall now discuss a sample of modern approaches to vv. 19–20 and point to their inadequacies. The verses would be analysed *seriatim*.

Verse 19

The exegetical frustrations that commentators experienced with v. 19 can be sensed already in Hufnagel’s attempts to decipher this verse. In his view, verse 19 is: “Eine der schwersten Stellen. Die alten Uebersetzer Geben wenig Trost und Veranlassung zur Berichtigung des Text”. He understood Elihu suggesting to Job that God does not appreciate his senseless talk and that having might does not mean being right (Wird er achten deiner Klagen Unsinn? Darf mit Gott jeder der Mächtigen rechten?).⁷ Unfortunately, Hufnagel obtains this interesting sense by assuming unattested meanings for four words in the text, and providing a new subdivision of vv. 19b and 20. Still, his valiant effort leaves the following verse senseless.

The enigmatic nature of v. 19 compelled commentators to admit alien notions into the conception domain of the Tanak. For instance, Umbreit (1824:337) suggested strangely that Job might have believed that his wealth should have had some weight in God’s treatment of him. He renders v. 19: “Sollt’ er etwa deinen Reichthum schätzen?

⁷ Hufnagel (1781:257) assumes that ערך = “appreciate” (achten), בצר = “sense” (Sinn) relying on the Arabic بَصْرَ “insight” (Einsicht, Verstand), מאמץ = “mighty” (Mächtigen), and יכה = “to be right” (rechten). Instead of MT v. 19b, he reads וּכְלֹל מֵאֲמֹצַי כֹּחַ אֵל; attaching אֵל from the following verse.

— Nicht köstliches Metall und alle Stärke des Vermögens halt er werth!”⁸ However, Job never made such an unlikely claim.

Many commentators tried to understand v. 19 as a continuation of v. 18. For instance, Arnheim (1836:209) perceives this verse as a juxtaposition of ransom, enabled by material wealth, and forgiveness in response to a sincere plea. Elihu asks: Can all the riches of one with a guilt-burdened conscience outweigh a plea flowing from a pure heart? He renders v. 19: “Würde das auswiegen dein Gebet?—Kein Gold und kein durch Kraft Erstrebtes!”⁹ In Arnheim’s view, the subjects of ערך are כפר in the preceding verse and קָצָר and מֵאֲמִצֵי־כַח in this verse. It is difficult to anchor Arnheim’s understanding in his emended text, and adoption of his emendations leaves the following verse truncated and meaningless.

Commentators also tried to exploit more modern psychological notions of the relation between anger and suffering to explain Elihu’s words. For instance, Hahn sees in v. 19 Elihu’s reasoned explanation to Job, that with his anger he would not be able to relieve his suffering. Hahn (1850:288) translates: “Wird dein Schreien dich den stellen wo Gedränge nicht ist. Und der ganze Kraftaufwand?”¹⁰ All the complaining would not relieve Job from his misery and help him to attain happiness. While Hahn’s idea seems plausible, it is difficult to see what v. 19b adds to Job’s crying and how v. 19 is connected thematically to v. 20.

⁸ Umbreit’s (1824:337) reading rearranges the verse division into cola and supplements the words לאי ערך at the end. Also, Umbreit assumes that מֵאֲמִצֵי כַח = Stärke des Vermögens, which is unattested in the Tanak. Nowhere in the Tanak is אֲמִץ associated with an inanimate object.

⁹ Arnheim (1836:209) assumes that ערך = “outweigh” (auswiegen); קָצָר = “gold” (22:24–25), reading קָצָר instead of MT קָצָר; שׁוֹעֵב = “your plea” (Gebet), perhaps reading שׁוֹעֵב; and, וְכָל מֵאֲמִצֵי־כַח = “and all the efforts of force can aspire it” (durch Kraft Erstrebtes), apparently connecting אל־תִּשְׁאֵף from the following verse to v. 19b, which atypically overloads the hemistich. Dillmann (1891:309) notes that: “ערך kann zwar nach 28,17. 19 *einem gleichkommen* bedeuten, wenn es einem Acc. bei sich hat; aber hier fehlt ein solcher, und ausreichen bedeutet es nicht, auch nicht: aestimavit = *magni fecit*.”

¹⁰ Hahn (1850:288) argues that שׁוֹעֵב should be understood as “your cry”, however not as a plea but rather as a complaint. Also, קָצָר has the same meaning as in v. 16, “distress” (Bedrängnis); here the enemy that causes you to be distressed. Unfortunately, MT does not have anything that corresponds to “dich denn”.

Some commentators find in v. 18b a warning from Elihu. Job should not imagine that he would be able to redeem himself from judgment by a large ransom. They consider v. 19 to be an elaboration of this thought. Delitzsch (1869:284) argues that

apart from the want of connection of this insinuation, which is otherwise not mentioned in the book, and apart from the violence which must be done to *הִנְעָרָהּ* to accommodate it to it, *שׁוֹעַ*, although it might, as the abstract of *שׁוֹעַ* ch. xxxiv. 19, signify wealth (comp. *سَعَة*, *amplitudo*), is, however, according to the usage of the language (*vid.* ch. xxx. 24), so far as we can trace it, a secondary form of *שׁוֹעַ* (*שׁוֹעָה*), a cry for help; and ch. xxxv. 9 sq., ver. 13, and other passages, also point to this signification.

Like Hahn, Delitzsch (1869:283) understands v. 19 as a rhetorical question, in which Elihu asks whether Job expects that his plea would place him beyond anyone's reach. He translates v. 19: "Shall thy crying place thee beyond distress, And all the efforts of strength?" However, if this is the meaning of v. 19, then it cannot be a rhetorical question, since it would be referring to the grave. Job already stated categorically that he would, indeed, prefer the grave (3:11–19). Moreover, *עָרַךְ* does not mean "to place" (Heb. *הִנִּיחַ*, *הָנִיחַ*) and the MT does not have a word that corresponds to "thee".

Atypically for the bulk of exegesis on this verse, Ewald (1882:344) finds in Elihu's words strong military overtones. He envisions Job arraying against God all his wealth as if they were his military forces. Ewald has for v. 19: "Shall thy wealth set itself in array—without distress, with all the means of force?" In Ewald's view, Elihu is asking Job whether Job's wealth (*שׁוֹעַ*) should be mobilised with all other means of influence (*וְכָל מַצְמָצֵי-כֹחַ*), which are used for defense against human enemies, without there being any external distress at hand, "since the enemy that troubles thee is God against whom a man cannot arm himself". However, the image suggested by Ewald is too vague to be useful and meaningful. Schlottmann (1851:444) regarded Ewald's interpretation as "ein matter Gedanke in schleppender und unklarer Weise ausgedrückt." Actually, Ewald turns v. 19 into an oxymoron; i.e., should he arm himself against someone that he cannot arm himself against?

Hirzel (1885:215) viewed v. 19 as part and parcel of verse 18. Elihu suggests that Job is trying to extricate himself from a judgment that befits a wicked person (v. 17: דיִן־רשע (רב־כֶּפֶר). The rhetorical question in v. 19, however, makes it clear that this stratagem would not work. Elihu asks: Would your wealth be sufficient? O! Not gold and not all the treasures of assets! (Wird ausreichen dein Reichthum? O! nicht Gold und alle Schätze des Vermögens nicht!).¹¹ However, the verb עָרַךְ never means in the Tanak “to be sufficient”. The sense שֹׁמֵעַ = “wealth” would be unique to Elihu, since elsewhere the term הָיִל is used. It is also somewhat strange that two different forms of בְּצָר would be used in the same book (22:24 and 36:19). Moreover, Job never mentioned the possibility of using ransom for extricating himself from his predicament. Several times, however, he expressed his desire to die. In this context, the warnings in verses 18–19 lose their force and reveal a significant disconnect between Elihu’s rhetoric and Job’s tragedy.¹² Finally, the sense obtained for v. 19 makes v. 20 meaningless.

It has been suggested that Elihu views Job’s experience as an educational exercise. For instance, in Dillmann’s view, Elihu suggests to Job in v. 19 that Job should realise that without there being distress his situation would not be righted. God will not bring Job’s cry into order (i.e., make his rebellious cry one of humility and submission), without (the use of) affliction, and all the efforts of (his) strength? Dillmann (1891:309) renders: “Wird er dein Bitter geschrei in Ordnung bringen ohne die Noth und (ohne) die Kraftmittel?”¹³ Schlottmann (1851:444) observes that: “das ‘in der Noth’ giebt hier einen sehr kräftigen Sinn, nämlich den: wenn nun das letzte, schwere Gericht (das V. 17 angedroht wurde), wenn die äußerste Noth wirklich eintritt, dann

¹¹ According to Hirzel (1885:215), Elihu expresses in v. 19 an idea that is similar to that in Prov 11:4 and Ps 49:8–9. In his translation עָרַךְ = “suffice” (ausreichen) as in 28:17 and 19 (i.e., match in value something [here Job’s sin]); שֹׁמֵעַ = “wealth” (Reichthum); and בְּצָר = “gold” (Gold) is a later form of בְּצָרָה.

¹² Hitzig (1874:264) observes: “Wenn Hiob aber kein כֶּפֶר bieten, sondern sterben will, wie er diess wiederholt geäußert hat (6,7. 10,1. 17,13), so bleibt das Mahnwort VV. 18. 19. ohne Eindruck.” Hitzig has for v. 19: “Wird dein Reichthum ihm gleichkommen? Nicht Gold und alle Kräfte des Vermögens.”

¹³ Dillmann (1891:309) assumes that עָרַךְ refers to God, שֹׁמֵעַ is accusative, v. 19b is the continuation of לֹא בְצָר, and v. 19b = “power means” (die Kraftmittel).

erkannt der Verblendete zu spat, das er kein Lösegeld für ihm giebt". This image is, however, entirely out of line with Job's dilemma. It is difficult to accept the notion that the clever and articulate Elihu would advance such an odd insinuation.

A number of commentators viewed לא בצר as being equivalent to לא בצרה. For instance, Budde (1896:217) has for v. 19: "Wird dein Geschrei [dich] ausser Bedrängnis setzen, Und alle Anstrengungen der Kraft?" He explains: "Die überlieferten Consonanten sind in ganzen richtig punktiert (besser wohl שׁוּעַךְ) können nichts andres bedeuten, als was oben eingesetzt ist. Dass das Suffix bei יַעֲרֶךְ fehlt, bedeutet neben שׁוּעַךְ nichts; לא בצר versteht sich als acc. leicht. Nur עַרְךְ als 'hinstellen, setzen' kann Bedenken erregen, obgleich es nicht gar fern liegt." Budde's translation, which dovetails that of Stickel, is in Dillmann's view incorrect. He (Dillmann 1891:309) says: "Aber auch die von Stickel (Hahn, Delitzsch, Budde, Voigt) beliebte Auslegung: *soll [dich] hinstellen dein Schreien ausser Bedrängnis setzen, Und alle Anstrengungen der Kraft?* ist falsch, da *dich* nicht ausgedrückt ist, עַרְךְ nicht stellen bedeutet, und לא בצר nicht = בלא צר (8,11. 30,28) sein." Moreover, it is impossible to reconcile MT with Budde's notion of what the term שׁוּעַךְ means.

Some commentators felt that Elihu's judgment of Job's frustrated complaint is similar to that of Job's friends, but he expresses it more mildly. For instance, Duhm (1897: 173) perceives v. 19 as Elihu's rhetorical question to Job, in which he tries to diffuse Job's accumulated anger. Elihu asks: "Will your complaint in distress avail against him, or all exertions of strength?" (Aber kann den seine Beshwerde [die Schläge des Satans erlitten hat], die der Zorn ihm eingiebt, und alle Kraftanstrengung ihm etwas nützen gegen Gott aufkommen?).¹⁴ To obtain this understanding, Duhm (1897: 173) has to resort to a number of text critical emendations, and assume unattested meanings for some words.¹⁵ Elihu's words would seem, however, counter-productive. If nothing can "avail against him (God)" perhaps anger amounts to something.

¹⁴ Duhm (1897:173) seems to be reading: וכל מאמצי לו בצר וכל שיקה לו בצר וכל מאמצי כה.

¹⁵ Duhm assumes that עַרְךְ has here the same meaning as in 37:19 (in his view "avail"), reads לו ("to him") instead of MT לא, and reads שׁוּעַךְ "your complaint" (cf. 23:2) instead of MT שׁוּעַךְ, apparently assuming the phonetic ה/ע confusion. However, the sense of עַרְךְ in 37:19 is not obvious. As to the phonetic ה/ע confusion see Pinker (2013:1–8).

The problematic nature of v. 19 has been summarised succinctly by Barton (1911:278), saying: “The present text is difficult, and out of harmony with the context”. He favors reading *בלא צר* instead of MT *לא בצר*, obtaining for v. 19a: “Can he order thy salvation without distress?” In his view, this reading continues the thought of v. 18.¹⁶ Similarly, Driver and Gray (1921b:279–280) note that v. 19 is very difficult, and they dedicate almost two pages to the discussion of this relatively short verse. They say: “In a choice of difficulties, perhaps the best rendering is: ‘Will thy riches be equal (to it, i.e. suffice to do this) without affliction (i.e. suffering is indispensable), Or all exertions of strength?’”¹⁷ However, the theological notion at the base of these interpretations is untenable, and it is clearly unrealised in the evolution of Job’s narrative.

Kissane (1939:243–244) notes, “This verse has given rise to an extraordinary variety of interpretation”. One may add that it also led to some bold and clever emendations. For instance, Kissane suggests the word division: *הועד כְּשׁוֹעַ כְּלֹא־בְצָר וְדָלִים* וְאִמְצִי־כֹחַ “Arraign the rich as well as the penniless, and the weak and the mighty in strength.”¹⁸ This is hardly cogent Hebrew. The emended verse makes little sense in context. Moreover, the meaning “penniless” for *כְּלֹא־בְצָר* has no support, and one might have expected *כְּלֹא־בְצָר*.

It is noticeable that the word *היערך* presented to commentators unusual challenges. It was imbued with unattested meanings and devocalised variously. For instance, Tur-Sinai (1967:500) reads *הִיעָרְךָ* “stir you” instead of MT *הִנְעִרְךָ* “to arrange, to value, to set in order”; attaches *לא־בצר* to the following hemistich; vocalises *בְּצָר* “not wealth”

¹⁶ Barton (1911: 278) takes the verb *ערך* = “to order,” in the sense of “command” or “enact,” which is not attested in the Tanak; reads *בלא צר* instead of MT *לא בצר*; reads *ישעך* = “thy salvation” (cf. Isa 17:10); and understands *מאמצי* = “the forces,” which is uncertain, since *מאמצי* occurs only here. He takes the verb *ערך* = “to order,” in the sense of “command” or “enact,” which is not attested in the Tanak; reads *בלא צר* instead of MT *לא בצר*; reads *ישעך* = “thy salvation” (cf. Isa 17:10); and understands *מאמצי* = “the forces,” which is uncertain, since *מאמצי* occurs only here.

¹⁷ See also Driver and Gray (1921a:313).

¹⁸ Note also that the *כ/ק* confusion is attested in the Ketib-Qere apparatus only in 1Sam 4:13 *ך* (K) and *ד* (Q).

instead of MT **לֹא בְצָר** “not in distress”; and takes **מֵאֲמֻצֵי כֹחַ** = “treasures of riches”, which is unattested.¹⁹ Making these changes he obtains: “Should your wealth induce you? No, not wealth and all treasures of riches!”²⁰ However, the MT does not have two negations. Moreover, without indicating what the induced action is, the stated question is meaningless. Would Elihu object to wealth inducing charity? Tur-Sinai has in mind “induce you to pervert judgment”, but it is difficult to assume that a reader would draw the conclusion that one’s riches would induce corruption, obviously. Finally, already some earlier commentators objected categorically to the reading **בְּצָר**. For instance, Dillmann (1891:309, cf. also Delitzsch) says: “**בְּצָר** ist sicher nicht = **בְּצָר** 22,24f., auch nicht **בְּצָר** zu lesen, sondern aus **בְּ** und **צָר** zusammengesetzt.”

The perceived difficulties in our verses led Dhorme (1967:547) to the deletion of vv. 19–20. He says: “‘Can one compare your crying out to Him in distress with all the energies of might? Do not long for the night, in order that peoples may go up to their place.’ This text is foreign to our context, and its elements do not belong together.” Dhorme’s conclusion is obviously based on what he considers to be the only interpretation that is possible.

Exegetes’ long experience with v. 19 has not eased their frustration nor has it pointed to an acceptable interpretation. Even Pope (1986:267, 271), a relatively late commentator, points out that “Critics have found great difficulty in this line”. He emends MT **לֹא** to **לוֹ**, and renders: “Will your opulence avail with him in trouble,/ All the power of your wealth?”²¹ However, the succession of the 2nd singular masculine (**שׁוֹעַ**) by the 3rd singular masculine (**לוֹ**) causes misdirection, and makes the emended text refer to someone other than Job. Moreover, **עָרַךְ** could mean “arrange, set in order” but not “avail”, and **לוֹ** = “to him” not “with him”.

Also Gordis (1978:417–418), a relatively recent biblical scholar, notes, “Stich in a MT defies interpretation. The context suggests that **שׁוֹעַד** means not ‘cry, shout’ but

¹⁹ Delitzsch (1869:284) notes, “**אֲמִיץ כֹּחַ** signifies mighty in physical strength, ch. ix. 4, 19, and **מֵאֲמֻצֵי כֹחַ** strong proofs of strength, not “treasures of wealth”.

²⁰ Tur-Sinai (1967:500) notes that the synonyms **שׁוֹעַ**, **בְּצָר**, **מֵאֲמֻצֵי כֹחַ**, originally denoting “strength”, are used here in the sense of wealth, riches.

²¹ In Habel’s (1985:498–499) view “it seems preferable to take the second half of line 19a as the answer to the first and render, ‘Will wealth avail you? Not against the Adversary!’”

rather ‘wealth’; cf. שוֹעַ ‘nobleman, rich man’ (Isa 32:5, Job 34:19), Arabic *sa‘atun* ‘amplitude, wealth.’ He ventures to suggest that MT הִנְעִירְךָ should be revocalised as הִנְעִירְךָ the *hip‘il* of the root עוֹר with a 2nd singular masculine suffix, having the meaning “would it guard you”. In his view: “לֹא בְצָר = ‘literally a condition of no trouble, i.e. against trouble.’ For this use of the negative לֹא, like the Greek *Alpha* as a litotes, cf. Ps 36:5, Isa 10:7, 16:14, and see BDB c.v., sec. 2, p. 519b.” Gordis’ argument is rather weak. It is obvious that a condition of no trouble is not equivalent to an action against trouble. Also, all the cases cited by BDB and by Gordis in support of his interpretation are with לֹא followed by a word that is not prefixed, unlike the phrase לֹא בְצָר. Finally, his effort leads to the strange translation “Will your possessions guard you from trouble, or your exertions to achieve riches?”

Conclusions

Verse 19 has been identified by many as being one of the difficult verses in the book. This partial analysis indicates the failures of the exegetical efforts since the eighteenth century to decipher the meaning of v. 19 in context. It seems that these efforts were hampered by a sense of strong thematic connectivity between verses 18 and 19. The highlighting of “wealth” in v. 18 channeled commentators’ thinking in the direction of viewing v. 19 as Elihu’s denial of the role of “wealth” in Job’s tragedy. This perspective encountered difficulties in coherent integration of v. 19b into v. 19 and left v. 20 unattached and meaningless.

Verse 20

The exegetical frustrations that commentators experienced with v. 19 were carried over to v. 20 and further intensified. Complicating interpretation were the notions of “night” and “ascending nations”. For instance, following Michaelis, the eighteenth century commentator Hufnagel (1781:58–59) assumes that in v. 20 לַיְלָה refers to the night of judgment (Nacht des Gerichts), where nations go to their annihilation (wo

Nationen zu ihren Untergang hinaufgehen).²² The concept used by Hufnagel for לילה seems to be a mix of the temporal and positional, and unattested as such. Moreover, his notion contradicts the use of this concept in the Tanak, which speaks of the “Day of Judgment” and never uses לילה to designate Sheol. Finally, of what relevance could the fate of nations possibly be to Job’s personal problem?

Umbreit (1824:338) also views לילה here in the sense of Todesnacht des Unterreichs. In his opinion Job desires to descend to the peoples that “dwell” already under, in Sheol. Thus, he renders v. 20: Verlange nicht begierig nach der Nacht, zu jenen Völkern auszusteigen, welche unten wohnen”. This interpretation forces the meaning auszusteigen for עלה, which is the opposite of its standard sense. Umbreit (1824:338) explains that “wir עלה in seiner gewöhnlichen Bedeutung von *hinaussteigen* nähmen und es in einem witzigen Gegensatze mit dem folgendem תחת ausfässten”. One may well doubt whether the author could have expected the reader to catch this clever play on opposites.

It has been suggested that in v. 20 Job expresses a wish for the guilty rather than for himself. For instance, Arenheim (1836:288–289) proposes that Elihu tells Job ironically: Only those who are conscious of being free of any reproach can wish the wicked their punishment; but being convicted by your inner judge, one can on the day of judgment only think of the fury trembling. While this is a lofty idea, how can it be found in הלילה לעלות עמים תחתם? How can these four words possibly mean “Daß ja nicht dann du dich sehnst nach jener Nacht, (bestimmt) zum Herausziehn der Stämme an dieser’ Stelle”.

Verse 20 has been understood as expressing Job’s request for an international upset in which he would find his demise. Thus, Hahn (1850:288–289) views v. 20 as Elihu’s reminder to Job not to cause his own destruction, by causing an upheaval in the relative rankings of nations. He translates: “Nicht herbei die Nacht, Wo zu oberst kommen Völker mit dem Untern (Jud 7:13).” This translation assumes that הלילה is a metaphor for “destruction, annihilation” (*Verderbens, Unterganges*), and that the

²² Hufnagel (1781:58–59) has for v. 20: “Harrst du der Nacht, Die Nationen dem Untergang nähert.” He reads with Michaelis תחתם “annihilate them” (niederwerfen soll), instead of MT תחתם.

contrast between תהתם and לעלות determines for לעלות the sense “elevate” (oberst kommen). It is, however, difficult to imagine that the single, suffering, and devastated Job could play any significant role in upsetting the international order of nations.²³

Delitzsch (1869:283) envisioned v. 20 as Job’s plea for a cataclysmic event in which entire nations would be affected. He renders v. 20: “Long not for the night to come, Which shall remove people from their place!” In his view, Elihu suggests that Job consider the uselessness of his contention with God, and warns him of provoking divine judgment. If God can annihilate entire nations *in situ*, how much less shall the individual be able to escape a similar fate! And yet Job kept pressing for a tribunal before such an awesome Judge, instead of humbling himself under His mighty hand. One would be hard pressed to find all that Delitzsch suggests in the MT. His perception that the night is the agent which removes people is a rather unlikely proposition in the Tanak. But even if we assume that the catastrophic event described in v. 20b occurs at night one faces serious questions. Why is “night” singled-out? Do disasters such as annihilation of nations happen mostly at night? Why is Elihu using a national disaster to address a personal problem? If v. 20b refers to exile, then it is unrealistic, since expulsions were not conducted at night and lasted longer than a night. Also, taking לעלות as the infinitive *hip’il* (לְהַעֲלוֹת), in the sense of Ps 102:25, would require מְתַקְתֶּם.

In Ewald’s (1882:344) opinion, Elihu suggests to Job that he should “not desire to provoke a great calamity, by not taking warning from a less serious one”. However, Job never desired that “the dark night of general calamity may come upon the earth (xxxv. 10b),” in which whole nations may perish where they are, though nations can suffer from the same “infatuated blindness of a great man”. Schlottmann (1851:444) notes, “Aber dies wäre hier ein ganz fremder Gedanke”. Indeed, Ewald’s causative connection between the personal and the communal has no support in Job’s words, nor is it grounded in biblical theology. The book of Job presents to the reader a personal problem that is confined to personal interrelations.

²³ Hahn’s (1850:288–289) image for v. 20 does not make sense even if the term עמים is assumed to refer to individuals, as Hengstenberg does. Cf. Hengstenberg (1870:302).

Hirzel (1885:215) thinks that in v. 20 Elihu is trying to tell Job that his wealth would be of little value to him in case he engages in mockery against God, “möge sich Hiob dazu verleiten lassen, sein Leben zu verwünschen, und die verheerende Nacht des Todes heran zu rufen!”²⁴ He renders the verse: “Lechze nicht nach der Nacht, welche die Völker entrückt von ihrer Stelle!” In this context, one would be rightly baffled by the introduction of nations into Job’s personal tragedy and personification of “night” in an unrealistic role. Hirzel tries to evade this difficulty by explaining that the night is one “welche dazu bestimmt ist, dass die Völker an ihrer Stelle entrückt werden”.²⁵ However, this notion is not stated or implied in the MT.

The dilemmas that commentators encountered come clearly to the fore in Dillmans’s treatment of our verse. He considers v. 20 to be another warning from Elihu about eagerness for divine judgment. In his view it is impossible to assume that “night” in v. 20a is used metaphorically for death, since such a sense would not fit the following v. 20b. Dillmann (1891:309) says,

Die *לילה* wird sofort im 2. Gl. erklärt; der Inf. mit *ל* ist gesetzt, weil das zu Sagende Gegenstand des Wunsches Ijobs ist: *dass* ganze Völker *auffahren* entweder in Folge der Erschütterung der Erde bei Gottes Ankunft (9,6. 26,11; Am 9,5 u. a.) oder *auffliegen* wie Staub im Wirbelsturm (Jes 5, 24) *an ihrer Stelle* (V. 16. 34,26. 40,12).²⁶

Still, while Job expresses his desire for divine judgment (13:18, 23:4) and death frequently (Pinker 2007:73–84), and people die often in the dark of the night (34:20, 25) the connection between “night” and “divine judgment” is too tenuous for making “night” a useful metaphor of “divine judgment”.

²⁴ Hitzig (1874:264) observes that the warning in v. 20 does not impress, since “verweist er ihm schliesslich diesen Wunsch [death], beschränkt sich dabei auf die Bemerkung, ein solches Verlangen sei sündlich”. Hitzig has for v. 20 the following contextually senseless translation: “Lechze nicht nach der Nacht, dahin aufzusteigen, worunter die Völker sind.”

²⁵ In Hirzel’s (1885:215) view, “Der Beisatz *לעלות עמים תחתם* bezeichnet dieselbe als seine furchtbar verheerende, alles Leben der Einzelnen, wie ganzer Völker, verschlingende Nacht”. However, there is no support in the Tanak for Hirzel’s notion.

²⁶ Dillmann (1891:309) translates v. 20: “Lechze nicht der Nacht, dass Völker auffahren an ihrer Stelle”.

While many deleted v. 20, Budde (1896:218) finds v. 20a useful; the night refers euphemistically to death, which Job frequently wishes. However, he argues,

dass das göttliche Gericht Nacht genannt würde, hat man nur aus Not angenommen, um dem unerklärbaren zweiten Versgliede einen Sinn abzugewinnen. ‘Dass Völker unter sich [oder: in ihre Stelle] auffahren’ ist noch das Beste, was man dafür vorgeschlagen hat, aber auch unbrauchbar. ... Eine brauchbare Verbesserung ist noch nicht geboten.

Naturally, the difficult v. 20 forced commentators to resort to reconstructions and emendations, or outright deletion of the verse. For instance, Duhm (1897:173) observes:

Der letzte Vierzeiler dieses Abschnittes 20-21 ist in ganz böartigem Zustande. Der M.T. bietet v. 20 folgenden Satz: schnappe nicht nach der Nacht, aufzusteigen Völker unter sich. Da giebt nicht einmal die erste Hälfte einem Sinn, selbst wenn man die Nacht (mit dem Artikel!) ohne alles Recht auf den Tod deuten wollte, denn Hiob hat niemals nach dem Tode ‘geschnappt’.

He suggests the reconstruction אַל תִּשְׂאָךָ הַלֵּיל לְעֹלוֹת עִם מַתְחַבֵּם “Let not folly deceive you, To exalt yourself with him that thinks himself wise”. While Duhm’s reconstruction of v. 20a is clever, that of v. 20b is improbable and awkward Hebrew.

On the other hand, Barton (1911:278) thinks that this verse is a gloss because the thought expressed in v. 19 is continued in v. 21. He has for v. 20: “Desire not the right, When people are cut off in their place”. It is difficult to see how הַלְיָיָה could possibly mean “right”, and לְעֹלוֹת could mean “cut”. Barton does not provide any explanation.

In the authoritative ICC, Driver and Gray (1921a:313) regard this verse as the most unintelligible of the verses among vv. 16–20. They translate: “Long not after the night, That peoples may go up [from] their place”. Driver and Gray explain: “challenge not the divine judgement (‘night’ being named as a time of disaster, 34:20, 25), which may prove to be of a kind in which whole people perish. Job has often

desired to meet God in Judgement (e.g. 13:22, 23:3–7).” While a number of exegetes allude to “night” as the time of some unusual calamity, this notion has no support in the Tanak.²⁷

While some modest emendation can be expected for an unusually difficult text, the emendations for v. 20 are usually more drastic, leading to impossible Hebrew usage. For instance, Kissane (1939:243–244) says: “What has been said of verse 19 is also true of this verse. The Hebrew is nonsense, and the suggested emendations unsatisfactory.” He makes the following drastic emendations: reads בְּלִי־לָךְ instead of MT הִלְיִלָּה , and עַמִּי instead of MT עַמִּים . These emendations allow him to read: “Oppress not them that belong not to you,/ That thy kinsmen may mount up in their place”. However, בְּלִי־לָךְ “without to you” is not a Hebrew phrase and never occurs in the Tanak. Also, the מ/כ confusion is rare in the Ketib-Qere apparatus, occurring only in 1 Kgs 1:16, 47, where אֱלֹהֶיךָ (K) but אֱלֹהִים (Q).

Tur-Sinai’s (1967:500) emendation is rather minor, but it introduces a notion that the author apparently tried to avoid consistently. Tur-Sinai, suggests a new word division of v. 20b for resolving the problems associate with this verse. He reads: $\text{לְעֵלוֹת עַמִּי מִתַּחְתָּם אֶל־תִּשְׂאֵף הַלְיִלָּה}$ “Do not desire to bring up my people from under them”.²⁸ The English translation, apart from being meaningless, introduces the critical term עַמִּי “my people”. It seems that the author of the book of Job tried meticulously to avoid any connection with the Jewish people, who are frequently called “God’s people” or “My people”. Did he fail in v. 20b? Moreover, if God speaks favourably of “his people”, how is it possible that they are trying to rise in the dusk from under the laws and judgments that God imposed on them?

Even a relatively recent commentator such as Pope (1986:267) perceives this verse as Elihu’s warning to Job not to be eager for the divine judgment which may annihilate him along with others. He has for this verse “Pant not for the night,/ When peoples vanish in their place”.²⁹ This theological perspective is incompatible with

²⁷ In Job 34:20 and 25 no calamity is being indicated.

²⁸ Tur-Sinai’s (1967:500) English translation, “Desire not the night to emerge under them in the dark”, is incorrect.

²⁹ Pope’s (1986:267) interpretation does not account for the proposition ל in לְעֵלוֹת . Furthermore, if Pope is correct then תַּחְתָּם is superfluous.

biblical thought and presents God as incapable of meting out personal judgment. It also presents an unrealistic image of mass disappearance at night.

Gordis (1978:418 and 406) tried to attribute to “night” both positive (in v. 20a) and negative (in v. 20b) attributes. He understands this verse as Elihu’s warning to Job not to hope for the shelter of the night because entire nations are destroyed by God overnight (34:20, 25). Like Pope, he renders: “Do not long for the shelter of night when peoples are cut off in their place”. This interpretation assumes that v. 20b means “for nations to go up, vanish in their place”. However, Elihu’s warning, as understood by Gordis, would sound hollow in Job’s ears. Clines (2006:864) rightly says, “It is ironic that Elihu should imagine Job longing for the night, when Job himself knows so much of ‘nights of misery, or, toil (עמל)’ (7:3), nights that are too long and full only of wakefulness (7:4), and nights that pierce his bones (30:17)”. Moreover, the sense that Gordis adopts for לעלות is not attested for nations elsewhere in the Tanak. No major dislocation of nations could have occurred realistically at night.

Habel (1985:509) introduces a sinister association between the forces of darkness and Job. In his view,

Elihu warns Job that for him there is no escape into the precarious and seductive world of the night, his only chance of deliverance is to avoid evil and repent. Many scholars consider v. 20 unintelligible in the context. But if night is considered a euphemism for the dark forces of the night world with whom, according to Elihu, Job is associated, the text makes sense.

This is not obvious, and unfortunately Habel does not explain.

Conclusions

This partial analysis indicates the failure of exegetical efforts to decipher the meaning of v. 20 in context. In particular exegetes struggled to justify the causative connection between the personal and the communal notions in the verse. Most exegetes were content to view v. 20a as alluding to Job’s desire to die, but failed to form a logical

link with v. 20b. As a stand-alone, v. 20 appeared as gibberish and its connection to v. 19 was an enigma. A number of commentators opted to delete this verse, or parts of it.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The partial analysis that was conducted in the preceding section shows clearly that vv. 19–20 should be considered from a new perspective. Such a perspective is adopted here. The solution that is proposed in this study assumes a conceptual framework that is based on accepted tenets of ancient military wisdom; a perspective that has not been fully explored hitherto. In the following sections each of the difficult verses will be discussed separately.

Interpretation of v. 19

Several commentators (Schulltens, Ewald, Pope, Good) attempted to exploit the military sense of ערך, but were not able to develop the image in which it would make good sense in context. For instance, Delitzsch (1869:284) says, “but the figure of a warrior is, with Hahn, to be rejected; ערך is only a nice word for שית, שים, to place, set up, ch. xxxvii. 19”. Pope (1986:271) wrote, “The verb ערך, ‘arrange, set in order,’ is used of military disposition of troops (cf., e.g., 1 Sam 4:2) and of juridical presentation (cf. 8:18, 23:4, Ps 50:21). The juridical sense suits the context best. Wealth and bribery cannot influence the divine judge.” Good (1990:150) opined, “The verb ערך probably does not have the military sense it has elsewhere”. Perhaps Ewald is the only commentator that tried to exploit the military connotation to any degree. Ewald (1882:344) has for v. 19a: “Shall thy riches set themselves in array (ערך in its military sense, as for instance in 1 Sam 4:2) without need, with all the forces of strength? (do you think to meet God with the weapons by which thou would ward off a human foe?)”. His effort was, however, hampered by his assumption that שועך means “your wealth”.

Indeed, the most problematic word in v. 19 is the noun שׂוֹעַ. שׂוֹעַ occurs only twice in the Tanak: in the very difficult verse 30:24, and in our verse.³⁰ One would be hard pressed to draw any definite meaning for שׂוֹעַ from just these two cases. The related noun שׂוֹעַ, occurs three times in the Tanak and in all cases (Isa 32:5, Ezek 23:23, Job 34:19) it refers to persons.³¹ In Arabic, the metathetical verb وَسِعَ means “to be noble, generous”.³² It has been generally assumed that שׂוֹעַ may mean “opulence, riches” (שׂוֹעַ = opulent in 34:19; שׂוֹעַ = noble in Isa 32:5), and it may also mean (from root שׂוֹעַ*, שׂוֹעַ) a cry for help (Isa 22:5 [שׂוֹעַ?]).

Mandelkern (1895:1158b) translates שׂוֹעַ by *opulentus, dives; liberalis, and noblis*. These meanings would fit the characteristics of a local landlord, prince, or potentate. BDB (2001:447a) renders the adjective שׂוֹעַ as “independent, noble (in station)”. Indeed, CAD (Brinkman 1992:417) notes that in Akkadian, šu’û A (*šuwā’u*) means “master, lord”, and šu-’-u = *šar-ru* (among synonyms for *šarru*, “king”) LTBA 2 2:30. One finds in ancient Akkadian sources *lê’û palkû tašîmti* “O wise one, of broad (understanding), master of knowledge”, Lambert BWL 86:254 (Theodicy); and, *šu-’-û tamû lu-ú*, *ibid.* 80:188. The exegetical history of v. 19 shows that the interpretations of שׂוֹעַ as “wealth”, “cry of help”, or “salvation (ישוע)” result in a text for v. 19 that is contextually awkward, and does not fit the following v. 20. On the other hand, both biblical and cognate language sources support for שׂוֹעַ the meaning “ruler, prince, potentate”. This meaning is adopted here. Within the military framework, the phrase שׂוֹעַ הָעֵרֶךְ would mean “Would your prince array (his military forces)?”

Attempts were made to understand לֹא בָצַר as being equivalent to בָּלֹא צַר (8:11, 30:28), but Driver and Gray (1921b:279) note that the two phrases do not express similar notions. If the military perspective is adopted, then it is easy to see that לֹא בָצַר might be considered an abbreviation of לֹא בָּא צַר, “an enemy did not show up”. After

³⁰ For instance, Driver and Gray (1921b:279) suggest the reading יְשׂוֹעַ in Job 30:24.

³¹ Some include in this group also Isa 22:5. Hengstenberg (1870:301) says correctly that the meaning “wealth” (Reichtum) for שׂוֹעַ is derived from the meaning “the rich” (Reiche) in 34:19.

³² Driver and Gray (1921b:279) note that Arabic *sa’at^m*, (Qor. 6:57) is derived from *wasā’a*, to be capacious, *wiae* = Hebrew שׂוֹעַ*; properly width, breadth, amplitude, and so amplenness of means, competence, wealth.

the exile of Judah to Babylon, Aramaic became popular among the exiled, and the Aramaic script officially replaced the paleo script. Tur-Sinai (1947:73) claimed that from Aramaic, in which abbreviations are frequent, the Israelites learned to do likewise in the Hebrew Bible. The Masoretes eventually replaced these abbreviations with the corresponding words. However, in some places they apparently did not recognise the abbreviation or mistook a legitimate word for an abbreviation. Tur-Sinai points, for instance, to Num 23:10, where *ומספר* should be *ספר* and *ומי*; Deut 32:35, where *לי* should be *ליום*; Josh 8:9, where *העם* should be *העמק*; Judg 1:16, where *העם* should be *העמלקי*; 1 Kgs 9:17, where *בארץ* should be *צוּבא*; 2 Kgs 6:27, where *אל* should be *לאם*; Ps 89:51, where *כל* should be *כלמת*; 2 Sam 4:2, where *בנה* should be *בנה*; etc. The single letter *ב* was often used to represent *בן*, *בת*, *בית* (= *בא* in Aramaic), and perhaps also *בא*, depending on the context.³³ Thus, it is possible that v. 19 read originally *היערך בלא צר* “Would your prince array (his forces) without the enemy having come?”

The term *מאמץ* occurs only in Job 36:19, but is more frequent in the Talmud, where *מאמצין* = “strengthen” (y. *Taanit* III:66), *מאמצין את המת* = “close the eyes of a deceased person” (y. *Sabbath* XXIII:5), *מאמץ* = “concentrates” (b. *Sanhedrin* 44^b), *מאמצי הלב* = “close their heart, hard-hearted” (b. *Sota* 47^b) (cf. Jastrow 1903:78). In the military context the phrase *מאמצי כח* would naturally refer to elements that would make the main body of warriors stronger; i.e., “force enhancers”, such as personal armor, lance throwers, bow shooters, rock slingers, fire starters, chariots, cavalry, etc. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that v. 19b means simply “and with all the force enhancers.” Thus, the question in v. 19 states: “Would your prince array without the enemy having come, and with all the force enhancers?”

Elihu obviously expected a negative response to the question posed in v. 19. Why? Because arraying one’s forces before an enemy arrives would have been a tactical folly. The validity of this fact within the framework of ancient military wisdom

³³ Naor (1960:104–111) identified abbreviations and acronyms in multi-version text. Driver also gives a list of cases which are supported by ancient versions. See also Driver (1962:76–94); Fishbane (1976:3–4); Perles (1922:4–35). In many cases the *א* at the end of a word in the Tanak is missing. For instance, one finds *שו* for *שוּא* (Job 15:31); *אבי* for *אביא* (1 Kgs 21:29); Mic 1:15 *אבי* (K) but *אביא* (Q); Sir 15:19 *והו* instead of *והוא*; and others.

requires recollection of some of the military routines that have been practiced in the far past.

Ancient order of battle

In ancient times, there was no national army. In the case of an emergency, the entire available force of citizens would be called up for service. Obviously, rich people with extensive possessions had to maintain a security force for protection against robbers and raiding parties (Gen 14:14, Job 1:17). The Tanak might be referring to these elements as נערים “the youngsters”. Governors retained their own forces, which were required for small local wars, or as a contribution to the King’s military exploits, along with those of client princes.³⁴

Even when kingdoms were rich enough to support a standing army, this corps of conscripts was usually small, and an attack by a strong enemy required its supplementation by a levy mobilisation of essentially farm-hands from the various governors/princes in the kingdom.³⁵ For instance, peasants were always liable for military service all through the history of Assyria (Battery 1974:46). Wiseman (1984:41) writes:

With the exception of bodyguard, with its contingent of foreigners, the Assyrian kings relied principally on the mass call-up or levy of native

³⁴ Stillman and Tallis (1984:29) note that one component of the army in the Neo-Assyrian Empire (745–609 B.C.E.) was the “territorial army” (*sab sharri*). The provincial governors were responsible for the mobilisation of these troops. Each unit commander was allocated a village or group of villages from which to form his unit and was responsible for the call up of his own men.

³⁵ Wiseman (1984:36) notes that in 880 B.C.E. the Assyrians tried to protect the borders of their land by “calling up men each spring, after the crops have been sown, to patrol the border and move out to harass intruders”. Weisman (1984:38) observes that following Tiglath-pleser’s (745–727 B.C.E.) administrative and military reforms, “the provinces contributed on a regular basis to raise contingents for a centrally controlled standing army”. Also, Weisman (1984:40) writes that Sennacherib reported to Sargon II (721–705 B.C.E.) that “The troops of the Uartian king have been utterly defeated on his expedition against the Cimmerians. Eleven of his governors have been eliminated with their troops; his commander-in-chief and two of his chief officials have been taken prisoners ... They have suffered a terrible defeat. Now the country is quiet again and each of his officials has gone to his own region.”

Assyrians. These were mainly agricultural workers but also included groups of hard hill men and semi-nomads prepared to forego their independence to maintain a defense force for times of crisis.

These contingents of essentially farm-hands, mobilised in time of need, were commanded in the battle by their own governors/princes, because of familiarity, ease of communication, and loyalty considerations.³⁶ Some commanders were marked by their official position (the governor and chief cupbearer Rab-shaketh of 2 Kgs 1). Elihu refers to them as אֲנֹכְךָ, “your noble, your prince”.

Since early antiquity, major battles in open terrain between nations involved clashes of masses of people against masses of people. For instance, an Old Babylonian text from Mari on the Euphrates, which was written in the early second millennium B.C.E., lists an army of 100 000 men with 20 000 archers and 1500 cavalry (Wiseman 1984:42). Assyrian armies, according to ancient records, could reach 100 000–200 000 soldiers (though the reliability of these number is questionable) (Battery 1974:46). It seems that even in those times a rudimentary phalanx organisation existed that eventually developed into a more sophisticated and regimented form of warfare. Each local contingent, commanded by its prince, occupied a section of the phalanx and had to maintain cohesion during the battle.

It was obviously a feat to organise such masses of infantry, specialised fighters, and mobile units and keep the various units intact for maneuvering as fighting entities (Keegan 1993:229). Elihu refers to this combat formation by the term עָרַךְ = “to mobilise, set up battle formations”. Waiting in battle formation for the beginning of the battle was usually tense and physically taxing. Maintaining discipline and order was difficult. If the enemy was not in sight, or the battle did not start soon after battle positions were taken up, there was a good chance that discipline would break down and disorder would ensue. Commanders tried to avoid such circumstances as much as possible. This might have led to the dictum: Do not get into battle formation until you see the enemy doing likewise.

³⁶ Wiseman (1984:37). Wiseman says that Assyrian “vassal rulers were obliged to supply auxiliary troops and many Aramaeans have been identified as mercenaries within the Assyrian army”. Obviously, these troops were commanded by their own princes and commanders.

The importance of not committing unilaterally one's forces to position, and phalanx orientation, comes to the fore in the attempts of both sides to negotiate the battle site. It was not unusual that one side sent messengers to the opponent, challenging him to do battle at a particular site and time. Indeed, in the ancient Near-East the war "protocol" for battles in the open terrain required some negotiation and pre-agreement on the site of the battle, its time, and coordination of the moves by the opposing forces that were arrayed for battle. Liverani (2001:109) observes:

the battle had to take place in an area known to both sides, an open space suitable to the movement of the armies and to the requirement that each should enjoy a clear view of the other; this also means that it must take place during the day. ... The battle itself does not take place 'suddenly' or by surprise, but when both armies are properly arrayed.³⁷

Those who did not follow this protocol were contemptible warriors who were treated harshly when defeated.³⁸

Obviously, there were kings who knew the rules but chose not to follow them. In this case, the two opposing forces in open terrain usually gravitated to a battle site that had some advantages for both sides, or the battleground was forced upon these forces by topography. Historical records show that non-compliance with the battle "protocol" could lead to disaster. For instance, at the battle of Megiddo (circa 1482 B.C.E.) Pharaoh Thutmose III had to fight a coalition of rebellious Canaanite vassal states (Hayden 1913:53). When the Egyptian forces reached the vicinity of Gat in the south, they learned that the Canaanites had concentrated their forces near the fortress city of Megiddo. The Egyptian forces could reach these forces in one of three possible routes: via Yokneam, Aruna, or Taanakh. The Aruna route, along a narrow mountain pass,

³⁷ Liverani (2001:109) cites a message from an opponent of Tukulti-Ninurta saying, "Tukulti-Ninurta, your army should stand fast until the appointed time of Shamash arrives. Do not begin your fighting until the right season to fight me."

³⁸ Liverani (2001:109) notes, "The Asiatic nomads, according to Egyptian judgement do not communicate the day of the battle. The Kishka tribes attacked during the night, from behind by surprise."

was the shortest coming in from the south, but also the more difficult one.³⁹ Also, the Egyptians had apparently incorrect intelligence about the Aruna route being blocked by Canaanite forces. Thutmose III was advised to avoid the Aruna route, but disregarded this advice. Taking the Aruna route the Egyptians appeared between the enemy chariots and its arrayed battle formation facing the Taanakh approach.⁴⁰ Since the Egyptians attacked from the back, the Canaanite phalanx could not reorient its position and was quickly defeated. The lesson learned from this famous battle is implicitly expressed in the rhetorical question of v. 19.

Sargon's eighth campaign, to Urartu (714 B.C.E.), is another famous battle in which the battle "protocol" was disregarded. Since the road of entry to Urartu was between two steep mountains, Urartu's king Ursâ chose the valley between these mountains as the battle site, believing that Sargon II had no choice but to enter Urartu there. His forces were set up in a phalanx battle formation that faced the entry to Urartu. Alerted by his spies, Sargon chose to scale the mountain and appeared unexpectedly at Ursâ's flank. The Urartians tried hastily to reorganise the battle formation but were unsuccessful, and consequently defeated.⁴¹ This defeat clearly illustrates the potential hazards of premature commitment to a particular battle formation.

In an open battle the opposing forces entered taxing battle formations only when it was obvious that the opponent was also committed to the fight, or that any maneuver

³⁹ An inscription from the Amen Temple at Karnak attests that Egyptian generals pleaded, "Let our victorious lord proceed on the one of [them] which is [satisfactory to] his heart, (but) do not make us go on that difficult road (Aruna route)!" (Pritchard, 1969:234).

⁴⁰ The Canaanite forces tried to use a tactical ruse. Their plan assumed that the Egyptians would not take the Aruna route, but will opt for the Taanakh route which was the next shortest. This was the main route from the Mediterranean lowlands into the Valley of Kishon, and from Egypt to Mesopotamia [the main route from the Mediterranean lowlands into the Valley of Kishon, and from Egypt to Mesopotamia]. A contingent of foot soldiers guarded the southern road from Taanakh, while the northern approaches of Megiddo through Yokneam were held by a similar force. The chariots were concentrated around Megiddo itself, waiting for the Egyptian forces to attack the foot soldiers blocking the Taanakh route, who would quickly retreat as if they were fleeing. Egyptians pursuing the Canaanites would break ranks and would be attacked by the hidden Canaanite charioteers.

⁴¹ The quick reorientation of an asymmetrical phalanx was an impossible maneuver when under attack (Wiseman 1984:51).

by the opponent would result in a positional disadvantage to him. Job, making his case against God, seems to Elihu akin to a prince who is putting his forces into battle positions without there being an enemy. In line with the Prologue, Elihu does not see God as Job's enemy. Indeed, in the Prologue God always speaks with the highest esteem of his servant Job. Elihu suggests to Job that he must, so to speak, "see the white in the eyes of his enemy" before he shoots.

Interpretation of v. 20

The second metaphor, in v. 20 also expresses a military dictum, albeit one that is less categorical than in v. 19. Perhaps for that reason, Elihu does not present it as a rhetorical question but rather as advice for prudent behavior – as an exhibition of self-control. Elihu begins his advice with a term that is obviously organic and natural, the onomatopoeic *חָשַׁח* that imitates the sound of exhalation of air in deep breathing or panting.

The verb *חָשַׁח* occurs many times in the Tanak, and may be kindred to *חָשַׁב*, *חָשַׁב*, or Arabic *سغب* "to hunger". It is usually assumed to mean "to gasp, pant after, long for, and be eager for". *חָשַׁח* occurs three times in the book of Job (5:5, 7:2, 36:20). The second term in v. 20, the masculine noun *לילה*, means "night" in Hebrew and cognate languages. As we have seen, some scholars understood this term as a euphemistic reference to "the night of death". However, there is no compelling reason for such concept and the corresponding extension of the semantic field of *חָשַׁח*. Thus, v. 20a simply says: "Do not desire the night".

The term *לעלות*, in v. 20b, has clear military connotations. Pinker (2002-2003:1–4) showed that this sense occurs in Phoenician and Ugaritic sources and might have been used in Nah 2:2. He says:

על could have also been understood as a poetic shortened *עלה*, 'attacked.'

Such sense is attested in Phoenician Ahiḥam: 2, *w'l mlk bmlkm wskn bs[k]nm wt' mhnt 'ly gbl*, 'If any king whatever, or any governor whatever, or camp commandant should attack Byblos.' The verb *'ly* can govern a direct object as also found in the Ras Shamra text RŠ 24.277,

hm qrt tuḥd (?) hm mt y'l bnš, ‘Either the city will be seized or Death will attack man.’ Dahood (1978:231) used this evidence from Ugaritic sources to interpret in Ps 35:20 the phrase *וְעַל רֹגְעֵי אֲרֶץ*, ‘but attack the oppressed.’ He claims there that ‘From the point of view of style, consonantal *w'l* should express a verb antithetic to ‘speak of peace.’ This desideratum can be obtained by pointing *we'ālū*.’

Assuming this military sense for *עלה*, the phrase *אל-תשאף הלילה לעלות* would mean “Do not desire the night for attacking”. Attachment of *לעלות* from the following colon makes the thought in the first colon more complete.

The subject of attack, in the military dictum expressed in v. 20, are the *עמים תחתם*. The phrase “person/persons [is/are] תחתם/תחתו” means that “person/persons stays/stay put” (1 Kgs 5:5, Mic 4:4, 1Sam 14:9, Exod 16:29, Jud 7:21, Jon 4:5, Josh 5:8, 1 Chr 5:22). Since *לעלות* was attached to the preceding colon it is necessary to attach the first word of the following verse (v. 21) to it. However, *השמר* does not fit the context. Thus, it is being suggested that instead of *עמים תחתם* we read *עמים תחתם השמיד*, where *השמר* is emended using the frequent *ו/ד* confusion.⁴² The verb *שמד* means “be exterminated, destroyed”, and *השמיד*, its *hip'il* imperative masculine means “exterminate, destroy”. Consequently, *עמים תחתם השמיד*, means “peoples staying put destroy”.

If the two cola are joined, Elihu’s military metaphor emerges: “Do not desire the night for attacking peoples staying put destroy”. How should Job have understood this metaphor? Perhaps, Elihu is warning Job that he cannot hope to use obscurity for attacking and destroying what nations are settled upon. The metaphor then uses the confusion that usually exists in military night operations to advise Job against attacking existing national tenets using confusing arguments. While this idea can be

⁴² Kimchi (1160–1235) observes in his commentary on 1 Chr 1:7: “Since the *ד* and *ר* are similar in appearance, and among the readers of the genealogies which were written in ancient times, some read a *ד* and some read a *ר*, some names were preserved for posterity in two forms with either a *ד* or a *ר*.” For instance, *דעואל* (Num 1:14, 7:42, 7:47, 10:20)/*רעואל* (Num 2:14), *דודנים* (Gen 10:4)/*רודנים* (1 Chr 1:7, 6), *רבלה* (2 Kgs 23:33, 25:21, Jer 39:6, 52:26)/*דבלה* (Ezek 16:14), and *ריפת* (Gen 10:3)/*דיפת* (1 Chr 1:6). One finds in the Ketib-Qere apparatus the *ו/ד* confusion in 2 Sam 13:37 *עמיחור* (K) but *עמיחוד* (Q); 2 Kgs 16:6 *וארומים* (K) but *וארומים* (Q); Ps 19:19, Prov 19:19 *גרל* (K) but *גדל* (Q); Jer 2:2 *אעבוד* (K) but *אעבור* (Q); Jer 31:39 *השרמות* (K) but *השדמות* (Q); and, Ezra 8:14 *וזבוד* (K) but *וזכור* (Q). In Isa 29:5 *זריך*, but 1QIsa^a has *זדי*.

found in the words of Job's friends, the military metaphor imbues it with a sense of the disastrous consequences that it may have for the attacker.

Elihu obviously expects that Job would understand his allusion to military night operations. Why? Because the uncertain outcome, and often disastrous consequences of night operations, shaped something akin to the conservative dictum: "To attack at night is a risky gamble". A number of night operations are mentioned in the Tanak. The recounting of these operations in the Tanak often serves other purposes than being an exposition of regular military practices. This perspective, within the framework of ancient military wisdom, is explicated in the following section.

Night battles

Major battles in open terrain were, as a rule, conducted during daytime, and rarely at night (notice 1 Sam 17 where the two parties re-engaged each other day after day but did not fight at night). In the battle of Megiddo, when the Egyptian army came to the end of the road via Aruna, they stopped to rest for the night, which allowed its army to rest and bring up the rear. Similarly, in Exod 14:20 we read that the two opposing camps did not come near the other all through the night. This was the accepted *modus operandi* for battles in open terrain. Night operations of large forces, difficult these days with all the technological devices that are available, were almost impossible in antiquity, as Elihu alludes elsewhere (37:19b).

Yet, sometimes they were dared (Judg 7:15–25).⁴³ A night attack usually had the advantage of surprise, and this element enticed daring commanders (2 Sam 17:1–2). However, night also brought in confusion that inhibited normal combat operations that were possible during the day. For instance, King Joram of Judah attacked at night the rebellious Edomites that surrounded him. But Kogan and Tadmor (1988:96) think that most Edomites apparently escaped the attack and Edom continued in its rebellion (2 Kgs 8:21–22, 2 Chr 21:9).

⁴³ Battery (1974:41) notes that in 612 B.C.E., the forces of the Assyrian king Sin-Shar-Ishkun were defeated in a night attack by the combined force of Medes, Nabopolassar's (who changed sides) elements of Assyrian army, and reinforcements from Bacteria. It is not clear what role Nabopolassar and his contingent played in this night attack.

It was difficult in the darkness for units to find their place in the battle formation, and some lost their way, causing force separation. It was difficult to correctly identify the enemy at night, which might have led to “friendly on friendly” encounters. However, armies conducted night marches (Josh 10:9), or set-up at night ambushes (Judg 9:31–35, 2 Kgs 7:12), which were by their nature more controlled and managed, for surprise attacks in the morning. Night skirmishes, or raids, which are mentioned in the Tanak, usually involved small-size forces (Gen 14:15, Josh 8:3, 13–14, Judg 7:7, 1 Sam 14:36).

Conservative military thinking dictated avoidance of night operations because of the many logistical imponderables, and command, control, and communication issues. It would not be surprising if such thinking led to dictum in v. 20. Elihu, a young scion of an outstanding family (Job 32:6), might have had the military experience to advise Job not to desire the darkness of the night for attacking and destroying people who stay put. He could also hope that his readers would understand that he advises Job not to use confusing argument to undermine the status quo ante.

CONCLUSION

Elihu’s use of military metaphors is not unusual. He uses military notions in 33:5, 10–11, 18, 34:6, 20, 36:12, 14, 23, and 37:19b. As a young prince he may have had military experience, and thus was in command of accepted military dicta. Indeed, the military notions expressed in vv. 19–20 would not have been alien to the reader of the book since many were often called to serve in the army.

The military metaphors in vv. 19–20 relate to daytime and nighttime military operations, and fit contextually the list of warnings in vv. 18–21. Elihu alludes in the metaphors to misdirection and confusion. Job in his complaints, as any commander, should have a clear target, and not look for surprising moves that might cause more surprise to him than to the opponent. It seems that Elihu does not believe God to be Job’s enemy. If not God, who then is? The book’s narrative frame suggests that Satan might be his enemy. Job’s friends suggest that Job is his own enemy. Certainly,

Elihu's rhetorical question in v. 19 presents the reader with a thought-provoking dilemma. The metaphor in v. 20, on the other hand, expresses a conservative's annoyance with "half-baked" spectaculars against established tenets.

Assuming vv. 19–20 are military metaphors, relatively minor text-critical emendations result in the following text:

Would your prince array without the enemy having come	הֲיַעֲרֶךְ שׁוֹעֵד לֹא־בָא צָר
and with all the force enhancers?	וְכָל מַאֲמָצִי־כֹחַ
Do not desire the night for attacking,	אַל־תִּשְׁאַף הַלַּיְלָה לְעִלוֹת
peoples staying put to destroy.	עַמִּים תַּחֲתֵם הַשָּׂמַד

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