

Zophar's First Speech (c. 2200 BC)

Job 11

Zophar Rebukes Job Sharply— God Has Punished You Less Than Your Guilt Deserves

- 1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said,
- 2 “Should an abundance of words go unanswered,
or a man full of talk be vindicated?
- 3 Should your loose talk put people to silence?
And when you mock, shall no one put you to shame?
- 4 For you say, ‘My teaching *is* pure,
and I am clean in your sight.’
- 5 But, O that God might speak,
and *that* he would open his lips to you,
- 6 and *that* he would tell you *the* secrets of wisdom,
for insight has many sides.
And know that God on your behalf has forgotten some of your guilt.

God's Ways Are Beyond Understanding, and He Can See Your Iniquity

- 7 “Can you find *out* the essence of God,
or can you find *out* the ultimate limits of Shaddai?
- 8 It is higher than the heaven; what can you do?
It is deeper than Sheol; what can you know?
- 9 Its measure *is* longer than *the* earth
and broader than *the* sea.
- 10 “If he passes through and imprisons someone
and summons the assembly, then who can hinder him?
- 11 For he knows those who are worthless;
when he sees iniquity, he will not consider it.
- 12 But an empty-headed person will get understanding
when a wild donkey's colt is born *as* a human being.

If You Will Repent, God Will Again Bless You

- 13 “If you yourself direct your heart
and stretch out your hands to him—
- 14 if iniquity *is* in your hand, put it far away,
and you must not let wickedness reside in your tents—
- 15 surely then you will lift up your face without blemish,
and you will be firmly established and will not fear.
- 16 For you yourself will forget your misery;
you will remember *it* as water *that* has flowed past.
- 17 “And your life will be brighter than noon;
its darkness will be like the morning.
- 18 And you will have confidence because there is hope;
and you will be well protected—you will sleep in safety.
- 19 And you will lie down, and no one will make you afraid;
and many will entreat your favor.
- 20 But *the* eyes of *the* wicked will fail;
and refuge will be lost to them,
and their hope *is* to breathe their last breath.”

Job's Response to Zophar (c. 2200 BC)

Job 12–14

Job Responds With Sarcasm

- 12:1 Then Job answered and said,
- 2 “Truly indeed you *are the* people,
and wisdom will die with you.

- 3 I also have insight like you;
I am not more inferior than you.
And who does not know things like these?

Job Points Out the Irony—He is Derided by his Friends, While the Tents of Robbers are Peaceful

- 4 I am a laughingstock to my friends:
'He calls on God, and he answers him.'
A righteous, blameless man *is* a laughingstock.
5 Those at ease have contempt for *the* thought of disaster,
but it is ready for those unstable of foot.
6 *The* tents of *the* destroyers are at peace,
and *there is* security for those who provoke God,
for those whom God brings into his hand.

Even the Animals Know Your "Wisdom"

- 7 "But ask *the* animals, and they will teach you,
and the birds of the heaven, and they will tell you;
8 or ask the earth, and it will teach you,
and the fishes of the sea will declare to you.
9 Who among all of these does not know
that Yahweh's hand has done this?
10 In whose hand *is* the life of all living things
and the breath of every human being?
11 Does not *the* ear test words
and *the* palate taste food for itself?
12 Wisdom *is* with *the* aged,
and understanding *is in* length of days.

God is Sovereign—But He Does Not Always Act in Ways You Might Expect

- 13 "With him *are* wisdom and powerful deeds,
and to him *belong* counsel and understanding.
14 If he tears down, then it will not be rebuilt;
if he shuts a man in, then he cannot be freed.
15 Look, *if* he withholds the water, then they dry up;
and *if* he sends them out, then they overwhelm *the* land.
16 "Strength and sound wisdom *are* with him;
the deceived and *the* deceiver *are* his.
17 He leads counselors away stripped,
and he makes fools of judges.
18 He loosens *the* fetters of kings,
and he binds a loincloth on their loins.
19 He leads priests away stripped,
and he overthrows the members of ancient families.
20 He deprives *the* trustworthy of speech,
and he takes away *the* discretion of elders.
21 He pours contempt on noblemen,
and he loosens *the* girdle of *the* mighty.
22 "He uncovers mysteries out of darkness,
and he brings deep shadow to the light.
23 He makes the nations great, then he destroys them;
he expands the nations, then he guides them.
24 He strips *away* the insight of the heads of the earth's people,
and he makes them wander in a pathless wasteland.
25 They grope *in* the dark without light,
and he makes them stagger like a drunkard.

Job Tells His Friends to Be Silent and Let Him Address His Case Directly to God

- 13:1 “Look, my eye has seen everything;
my ear has heard and has understood it.
- 2 What you know, I myself also know—
I *am* not more inferior than you.
- 3 But I would speak to Shaddai,
and I desire to argue with God.
- 4 “But you whitewash with lies;
all of you *are* worthless healers.
- 5 O that you would keep completely silent,
and *that* it would become wisdom for you.
- 6 Please hear my argument,
and listen attentively *to the* pleadings of my lips.
- 7 “Will you speak falsely for God?
And will you speak deceitfully for him?
- 8 Will you show partiality for him?
Or do you want to plead God’s case?
- 9 *Will it be* well, if he examines you?
Or can you deceive him like deceiving a human being?
- 10 “Surely he will rebuke you
if you show partiality in secret.
- 11 Will not his majesty terrify you,
and his dread fall upon you?
- 12 Your maxims *are* proverbs of ashes;
your defenses *are* defenses of clay.

Job Is Certain of His Vindication

- 13 “Let me have silence, and I myself will speak,
and let come over me whatever *may*.
- 14 Why should I take my flesh in my teeth
and put my life in my hand?
- 15 Look, *though* he kill me, I will hope in him;
however, I will defend my ways before him.
- 16 Moreover, this *is* salvation to me,
that *the* godless would not come before him.
- 17 “Listen carefully *to* my words,
and *let* my exposition *be* in your ears.
- 18 Please look, I have prepared *my* case;
I know that I myself will be vindicated.
- 19 Who *is* he who will contend with me?
For then I would be silent, and I would pass away.

Job Addresses God—Two Pre-Trial Conditions

- 20 “Only you must not do *these two things* to me;
then I will not hide from your face:
- 21 withdraw your hand from me,
and let not your dread terrify me.
- 22 Then call, and I myself will answer;
or let me speak, then reply to me.

Job Addresses God—Explain My Fault, Why Are You Doing This to Me?

- 23 “How many *are* my iniquities and sins?
Make known to me my transgression and my sin.
- 24 Why do you hide your face
and count me as your enemy?
- 25 Will you terrify a blown leaf?
And will you pursue dry stubble?
- 26 “Indeed, you write bitter things against me,

- and you make me reap the iniquities of my childhood.
- 27 And you put my feet in the block,
and you watch all my paths;
you carve *a mark* on the soles of my feet.
- 28 And he himself wastes away like something rotten,
like a garment that *the* moth has eaten.

Job Addresses God—The Brevity of Life

- 14:1 “A human being born of a woman
is short of days and full of troubles.
- 2 Like a flower he comes up, and he withers away;
and he flees like a shadow, but he does not last.
- 3 Even on such a one you fix your eyes,
and you bring me into judgment with you.
- 4 “Who can bring a clean *thing* from an unclean *thing*?
No one!
- 5 If his days *are* determined, the number of his months *is* with you;
you have appointed his boundaries, and he cannot cross *them*.
- 6 Look away from him, and let him desist
until he enjoys his days like a laborer.

Job Addresses God—The Terrible Finality of Death

- 7 “Indeed, there is hope for a tree:
if it is cut down, then it will sprout again,
and its new shoots will not cease;
- 8 though its root grows old in the earth,
and its stump dies in the dust,
9 at the scent of water it will bud,
and it will put forth branches like a young plant.
- 10 “But a man dies, and he dwindles away;
thus a human being passes away, and where is he?
- 11 As water disappears from a lake,
and a river withers away and dries up,
12 so a man lies down, and he does not arise.
Until the heavens are no more, they will not awaken,
and they will not be roused out of their sleep.

Job Addresses God—A Hope after Death

- 13 “O that you would conceal me in Sheol,
that you would hide me until your wrath is past,
that you would appoint a set time for me and remember me.
- 14 If a man dies, will he live *again*?
All the days of my compulsory service I will wait,
until the coming of my relief.
- 15 You would call, and I myself would answer you;
you would long for the work of your hand.
- 16 For then you would count my steps,
but you would not keep watch over my sin.
- 17 My transgression would be sealed in a bag,
and you would cover over my guilt.

Job Addresses God—Hope Fades and Despair Returns

- 18 “But a mountain falls; it crumbles away,
and a rock moves away from its place.
- 19 Water wears away stones;
its torrents wash away *the* soil of *the* earth;
so you destroy the hope of human beings.
- 20 You overpower him forever, and he passes away;

you change his countenance, then you send him away.

- 21 His children may *come to* honor, but he does not know *it*;
or they may become lowly, but he does not realize it.
- 22 He feels only the pain of his own body,
and his inner self mourns for him.”

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