

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 spoke up and said:

- 2 “Should not this abundance of words be answered,
or should this talkative man
be vindicated?
3 Will your idle talk reduce people to silence,
and will no one rebuke you when you mock?
4 For you have said, ‘My teaching is flawless,
and I am pure in your sight.’
5 But if only God would speak,
if only he would open his lips against you,
6 and reveal to you the secrets of wisdom—
for true wisdom has two sides—
so that you would know
that God has forgiven some of your sins.

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

- 7 “Can you discover the essence of God?
Can you find out the perfection of the Almighty?
8 It is higher than the heavens—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 comes by and confines you
and convenes a court,
then who can prevent him?
11 For he knows deceitful men;
when he sees evil, will he not consider it?
12 But an empty man will become wise,
when a wild donkey's colt is born a human being.

If You Will Repent, God Will Again Bless You

- 13 “As for you, if you prove faithful,
and if you stretch out your hands toward him,
14 if iniquity is in your hand—put it far away,
and do not let evil reside in your tents.
15 For then you will lift up your face
without blemish;
you will be securely established
and will not fear.
16 For you will forget your trouble;
you will remember it
like water that has flowed away.
17 And life will be brighter than the noonday;
though there be darkness,
it will be like the morning.
18 And you will be secure, because there is hope;
you will be protected
and will take your rest in safety.
19 You will lie down with no one to make you afraid,
and many will seek your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked fail,
and escape eludes them;
their one hope is to breathe their last.”

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

Job 12–14

Job Responds With Sarcasm

12:1 Then Job answered:

- 2 “Without a doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.
- 3 I also have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things as 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,
I, who called on God and whom he answered—
a righteous and blameless man
is a laughingstock!
- 5 For calamity, there is derision
(according to the ideas of the fortunate)
—a fate for those whose feet slip!
- 6 But the tents of robbers are peaceful,
and those who provoke God are confident—
who carry their god in their hands.

Even the Animals Know Your “Wisdom”

- 7 “But now, ask the animals and they will teach you,
or the birds of the sky and they will tell you.
- 8 Or speak to the earth and it will teach you,
or let the fish of the sea declare to you.
- 9 Which of all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this,
10 in whose hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all the human race.
- 11 Does not the ear test words,
as the tongue tastes food?
- 12 Is not wisdom found among the aged?
Does not long life bring understanding?

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

- 13 “With God are wisdom and power;
counsel and understanding are his.
- 14 If he tears down, it cannot be rebuilt;
if he imprisons a person, there is no escape.
- 15 If he holds back the waters, then they dry up;
if he releases them, they destroy the land.
- 16 With him are strength and prudence;
both the one who goes astray
and the one who misleads are his.
- 17 He leads counselors away stripped
and makes judges into fools.
- 18 He loosens the bonds of kings
and binds a loincloth around their waist.
- 19 He leads priests away stripped
and overthrows the potentates.
- 20 He deprives the trusted advisers of speech
and takes away the discernment of elders.
- 21 He pours contempt on noblemen
and disarms the powerful.
- 22 He reveals the deep things of darkness,

and brings deep shadows into the light.

- 23 He makes nations great, and destroys them;
he extends the boundaries of nations
and disperses them.
- 24 He deprives the leaders of the earth
of their understanding;
he makes them wander
in a trackless desert waste.
- 25 They grope about in darkness without light;
he makes them stagger like drunkards.

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

- 13:1 “Indeed, my eyes have seen all this,
my ears have heard and understood it.
- 2 What you know, I know also;
I am not inferior to you!
- 3 But I wish to speak to the Almighty,
and I desire to argue my case with God.
- 4 But you, however, are inventors of lies;
all of you are worthless physicians!
- 5 If only you would keep completely silent!
For you, that would be wisdom.
- 6 “Listen now to my argument,
and be attentive to my lips’ contentions.
- 7 Will you speak wickedly on God’s behalf?
Will you speak deceitfully for him?
- 8 Will you show him partiality?
Will you argue the case for God?
- 9 Would it turn out well if he would examine you?
Or as one deceives a man would you deceive him?
- 10 He would certainly rebuke you
if you secretly showed partiality!
- 11 Would not his splendor terrify you
and the fear he inspires fall on you?
- 12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes;
your defenses are defenses of clay.

Job Is Certain of His Vindication

- 13 “Refrain from talking with me so that I may speak;
then let come to me what may.
- 14 Why do I put myself in peril,
and take my life in my hands?
- 15 Even if he slays me, I will hope in him;
I will surely defend my ways to his face!
- 16 Moreover, this will become my deliverance,
for no godless person would come before him.
- 17 Listen carefully to my words;
let your ears be attentive to my explanation.
- 18 See now, I have prepared my case;
I know that I am right.
- 19 Who will contend with me?
If anyone can, I will be silent and die.

Job Addresses God—Two Pre-Trial Conditions

- 20 Only in two things spare me, O God,
and then I will not hide from your face:
- 21 Remove your hand far from me
and stop making me afraid with your terror.

22 Then call, and I will answer,
or I will speak, and you respond to me.

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

23 How many are my iniquities and sins?
Show me my transgression and my sin.
24 Why do you hide your face
and regard me as your enemy?
25 Do you wish to torment a windblown leaf
and chase after dry chaff?
26 For you write down bitter things against me
and cause me to inherit the sins of my youth.
27 And you put my feet in the stocks
and you watch all my movements;
you put marks on the soles of my feet.
28 So I waste away like something rotten,
like a garment eaten by moths.

Job Addresses God—The Brevity of Life

14:1 “Man, born of woman,
lives but a few days, and they are full of trouble.
2 He grows up like a flower and then withers away;
he flees like a shadow, and does not remain.
3 Do you fix your eye on such a one?
And do you bring me before you for judgment?
4 Who can make a clean thing come from an unclean?
No one!
5 Since man’s days are determined,
the number of his months is under your control;
you have set his limit and he cannot pass it.
6 Look away from him and let him desist,
until he fulfills his time like a hired man.

Job Addresses God—The Terrible Finality of Death

7 “But there is hope for a tree:
If it is cut down, it will sprout again,
and its new shoots will not fail.
8 Although its roots may grow old in the ground
and its stump begins to die in the soil,
9 at the scent of water it will flourish
and put forth shoots like a new plant.
10 But man dies and is powerless;
he expires—and where is he?
11 As water disappears from the sea,
or a river drains away and dries up,
12 so man lies down and does not rise;
until the heavens are no more,
they will not awake
nor arise from their sleep.

Job Addresses God—A Hope after Death

13 “O that you would hide me in Sheol,
and conceal me till your anger has passed!
O that you would set me a time
and then remember me!
14 If a man dies, will he live again?
All the days of my hard service I will wait
until my release comes.

- 15 You will call and I—I will answer you;
you will long for the creature you have made.
- 16 “Surely now you count my steps;
then you would not mark my sin.
- 17 My offenses would be sealed up in a bag;
you would cover over my sin.

Job Addresses God—Hope Fades and Despair Returns

- 18 But as a mountain falls away and crumbles,
and as a rock will be removed from its place,
- 19 as water wears away stones,
and torrents wash away the soil,
so you destroy man’s hope.
- 20 You overpower him once for all,
and he departs;
you change his appearance
and send him away.
- 21 If his sons are honored,
he does not know it;
if they are brought low,
he does not see it.
- 22 Only his flesh has pain for himself,
and he mourns for himself.”

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