

# Job 12:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.

## Analysis

**Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth**—Job declares God's absolute sovereignty over water—both drought and flood. Hen ya'tsor ba-mayim ve-yivashu (הֵן יַעֲצֹר בַּמַּיִם וַיִּיבָשׁוּ), behold, He restrains the waters and they dry up) uses atsar (עָצַר), to restrain, withhold, or shut up. When God withholds rain, yabesh (יָבֵשׁ, they dry up) brings devastating drought, famine, and death—precisely what Job's friends claim happens as divine judgment for sin.

Vayshalchem vayahpekhu aretz (וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם וַיַּהֲפֹכֻם אֶרֶץ, He sends them out and they overturn the earth) presents the opposite extreme. Shalach (שָׁלַח, to send forth) depicts God actively releasing waters, while haphak (הָפַךְ, to overturn/destroy) describes catastrophic flooding that overthrows civilizations. The word haphak is the same verb used for Sodom's destruction (Genesis 19:25). Job's point devastates his friends' theology: both drought and flood come from God's sovereign hand, not as mechanical punishment for sin but as expressions of His inscrutable will. This echoes Genesis 6-9 (the Flood) and anticipates Jesus's teaching that God 'sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust' (Matthew 5:45).

## Historical Context

Ancient Mesopotamia's irrigation-dependent agriculture made water control literally a matter of life and death. Drought meant famine; flooding destroyed crops and cities. Job's audience would immediately grasp these extremes. His

friends have been arguing that calamity indicates divine displeasure. Job counters: God controls both withholding and sending waters, both drought and deluge, according to purposes beyond human comprehension. This challenges both ancient and modern attempts to explain every natural disaster as direct divine judgment for specific sins.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does recognizing God's sovereignty over both drought and flood challenge simplistic explanations of natural disasters as always being divine punishment?
2. What comfort and what challenge does it bring to know that God actively controls both the withholding and the sending of water?
3. In what ways does this verse call you to humble submission before God's inscrutable purposes rather than demanding explanations for His governance?

## Interlinear Text

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הֵן	יַעֲצֹר	בַּמַּיִם	וְיִבְּשׁוּ	וְיִשְׁלַחֵם
H2005	Behold he withholdeth	the waters	and they dry up	also he sendeth them out
	H6113	H4325	H3001	H7971
וְהִפְּכוּ	אֶרֶץ:			
and they overturn	the earth			
H2015	H776			

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Kings 17:1** (Parallel theme): And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

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