

# Job 16:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?

## Analysis

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**Shall vain words have an end?** (שָׁאַל קֹצֶן לְדִבְרֵי-רוּאַח, haqets ledivrey-ruach)—The phrase (divrey-ruach) literally means 'words of wind/spirit'—empty rhetoric lacking substance. Job throws Eliphaz's criticism back: you traffic in windy nothings, not me.

**Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?** (או מְהַנְּרִיאָךְ כִּי מָעֵנָה, o mah-yamritscha ki ta'aneh)—The verb מָרַץ (marats) means 'to provoke, embolden, make bold.' Job questions the audacity of Eliphaz's presumption. His friends speak confidently about matters beyond their knowledge—a perpetual temptation in theodicy debates. True wisdom requires epistemic humility.

## Historical Context

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Ancient wisdom literature prized brevity and precision. Verbose, repetitive counsel was considered evidence of folly (Proverbs 10:19). Job's accusation that his friends speak 'words of wind' invokes this cultural standard—they violate wisdom's own protocols while claiming to represent it.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## 1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

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

## Study Questions

1. When have you offered theological explanations for someone's suffering that were mere 'words of wind'?
2. What 'emboldens' people to speak confidently about mysteries they don't understand?
3. How can we cultivate the humility to say 'I don't know' when confronting suffering?

## Interlinear Text

## Additional Cross-References

**Job 6:26** (Word): Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?

**Job 15:2** (Parallel theme): Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?