

Job 16:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Shall vain words have an end? (הַקֵּץ לְדִבְרֵי־רוּחַ, haqets ledivrey-ruach)—The phrase דִּבְרֵי־רוּחַ (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? (אוּ מִהֲמַרְיֹצֵךְ כִּי תַעֲנֶה, 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

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

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

וְהָיָה	לְדַבְרֵי	רֵוֹחַ	אֵל	מֵהָ	לִּמְהִיזָה	כִּי
have an end	words	Shall vain	H176	H4100	or what emboldeneth	H3588
H7093	H1697	H7307			H4834	

תַּעֲנֶה:
thee that thou answerest
H6030

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?