

Job 29:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.

Analysis

The nobles held their peace (qol nedibim קוֹל נְדִיבִים, voice of nobles; chaba חָבָא, was hidden/silent)—literally 'the voice of nobles was hidden.' Nedibim denotes willing, generous, noble persons, suggesting voluntary aristocracy rather than inherited title. Their voices, normally authoritative and influential, fell silent before Job's wisdom. **And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth** (leshon לִשָּׁן, tongue; dabaq דָּבַק, to cling/cleave; chek חֶךְ, palate/roof of mouth)—vivid physiological imagery depicting complete speechlessness.

The verb dabaq appears in Genesis 2:24 ('cleave to his wife'), Ruth 1:14 (Ruth 'clave' to Naomi), and Psalm 137:6 ('let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth'). It suggests firm adhesion, clinging that cannot easily be separated. The nobles weren't merely politely quiet—they were struck dumb, unable to speak even if they wished. This intensifies verse 9's imagery: princes laid hands on mouths voluntarily; nobles' tongues cleaved involuntarily. Ezekiel uses similar language when God makes him mute (Ezekiel 3:26). The progression from verse 8 (young hide, aged stand) through verse 9 (princes silent) to verse 10 (nobles tongue-tied) builds to a climax of Job's former authority.

Historical Context

The distinction between 'princes' (v. 9) and 'nobles' (v. 10) reflects ancient Near Eastern social stratification. Nobles (nedibim) were generous, willing-hearted leaders who earned respect through character and benefaction, while princes

(sarim) held official positions. Both classes fell silent before Job, demonstrating that his authority transcended both inherited position and earned reputation. This dual silencing indicates that Job's wisdom couldn't be attributed merely to political power or social standing but derived from genuine moral and intellectual superiority rooted in his fear of God.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does authentic godly wisdom command respect across all social classes and positions?
2. What does Job's capacity to silence the eloquent teach about the superiority of wisdom over mere rhetoric?
3. How should this picture of earthly honor lost prepare Job (and us) to find ultimate identity and worth in God alone?

Interlinear Text

קוֹל	נְגִידֵי יָם	נָחֲבָ אֹ	וּ לְשׁוֹנָם	לְחִפּוֹם
their peace	The nobles	held	and their tongue	to the roof of their mouth
H6963	H5057	H2244	H3956	H2441

יִבְרָקָהּ:
cleaved
H1692

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 137:6 (Parallel theme): If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Ezekiel 3:26 (Parallel theme): And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house.

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