

# Job 31:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid  
wait at my neighbour's door;

## Analysis

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**The princes refrained talking** (sarim שָׁרִים, princes/leaders; atsar עַצָּר, to restrain/stop)—Job's presence silenced even the ruling class. These sarim were nobility, regional governors, or tribal chieftains whose voices normally dominated public discourse. Their voluntary silence acknowledged Job's superior wisdom and authority. **And laid their hand on their mouth** (sham yad le-peh שָׁם יָד לְפֶה)—a physical gesture appearing elsewhere in Scripture (Job 21:5, 40:4; Judges 18:19; Proverbs 30:32) signaling awe, submission, or the inability to respond adequately.

The hand-on-mouth gesture communicated that Job's words commanded such authority that interruption or contradiction would be inappropriate. This wasn't fearful suppression but voluntary deference to recognized wisdom. Proverbs 30:32 uses identical language: 'If thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth,' connecting the gesture to restraint from foolish speech. When God appears to Job in the whirlwind, Job himself makes this gesture: 'I will lay mine hand upon my mouth' (Job 40:4), recognizing divine wisdom's supremacy. The princes' silence before Job thus foreshadows Job's eventual silence before God—both recognizing a wisdom and authority transcending their own.

## Historical Context

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City gate assemblies in ancient Near Eastern culture provided forums for legal proceedings, commercial transactions, and civic governance. Leaders and princes would debate cases, render judgments, and discuss community matters. Job's

capacity to silence such discussions by his mere presence indicates extraordinary moral and intellectual authority. This culture valued eloquence and persuasive speech highly, making voluntary silence a powerful statement. The gesture of covering the mouth appears in ancient Near Eastern art and texts as a sign of respect or astonishment before deity or superior authority.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

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

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. What qualities produce wisdom so compelling that it silences opposition without argument?
2. How does the princes' voluntary silence before Job's wisdom compare to the mandatory silence creation owes its Creator?
3. When should we 'lay our hand on our mouth' rather than speak—what circumstances call for reverent silence?

## Interlinear Text

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אָמַן הַנִּפְתַּח לְבִן עַל אִשָּׁה עַל פֶּתַח הַדָּר  
H518 have been deceived If mine heart H5921 by a woman H5921 door  
H6601 H3820 H802 H6607

אֶרְבָּתִין עַל  
at my neighbour's or if I have laid wait  
H7453 H693

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ecclesiastes 7:26** (Parallel theme): And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.

**1 Kings 11:4** (Parallel theme): For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

**Judges 16:5** (Parallel theme): And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.

**Proverbs 6:25** (Parallel theme): Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

**Proverbs 22:14** (Parallel theme): The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

**Jeremiah 5:8** (Parallel theme): They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.

**Nehemiah 13:26** (Parallel theme): Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

**Hosea 7:4** (Parallel theme): They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.