

# Job 35:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge.

## Analysis

**Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain** (וְאֵיּוֹב הֶבֶל יִפְתֹּה־פִיהוּ, ve-Iyyov hevel yiphtseh-pihu)—The noun hevel (הֶבֶל, vanity, breath, emptiness) is Ecclesiastes' key word—all is vanity. The verb patsah (פָּצָה, "to open wide") suggests excessive speech. The phrase **he multiplieth words without knowledge** (בִּבְלִי־דַ'אֵת מִלִּין יַכְבִּיר, bivli-da'at millin yakhbir) uses kavar (כָּבַר, "to multiply, make many"). Elihu accuses Job of verbose ignorance. Yet God vindicates Job's speech (42:7), showing Elihu's judgment was premature and partially wrong. This teaches the danger of judging others' theology while in the midst of their suffering.

The charge of multiplying words without knowledge will ironically fall on Elihu himself when God speaks (38:2 parallels this language, though directed at Job). We all speak with incomplete understanding (1 Corinthians 13:9, "we know in part"). The gospel provides humility: we depend on divine revelation, not human wisdom. Christ, God's ultimate Word (John 1:1), alone speaks with perfect knowledge. Our theological speech must maintain epistemic modesty, recognizing the limits of human understanding while trusting divine self-disclosure in Scripture.

## Historical Context

Ancient wisdom tradition valued concise, weighty speech over verbosity. Proverbs 10:19: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." Ecclesiastes 5:2-3: "Be not rash with thy mouth... a fool's voice is known by multitude of words." Yet lament psalms and prophetic oracles could be lengthy. The issue isn't word count

but whether speech aligns with divine truth. Job's speeches, though extensive, God vindicates as substantially right (42:7). Elihu and friends spoke much but missed truth—demonstrating form doesn't guarantee content.

## 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 do we discern when extensive speech is necessary lament versus vain multiplication of words?
2. What does God's vindication of Job teach about speaking honestly in suffering?
3. How does Christ as God's perfect Word (John 1:1, 14) relativize all human theological speech?

## Interlinear Text

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וְאֵינִי	בְּלִי	יִפְתָּח	פִּי יְהוָה	בְּבִלְיִ	וְעַתָּה	מִלֵּי יִן
Therefore doth Job	in vain	open	his mouth	without	knowledge	words
H347	H1892	H6475	H6310	H1097	H1847	H4405

וַיִּכְבֶּרֶ:

he multiplieth

H3527

## Additional Cross-References

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**Job 38:2** (Word): Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?