

Job 38:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven,

Analysis

God's questions about clouds emphasize both knowledge and power. 'Number the clouds in wisdom' (saphar shechaqim, סִפְרֵ שְׁחָקִים) asks who possesses sufficient understanding to count and categorize atmospheric phenomena. 'Stay the bottles of heaven' (shakab niblei, שָׁקַב נִבְלֵי) uses imagery of tipping or pouring water containers—who can tip the heavenly reservoirs to release rain? The term 'bottles' (nebelim, נִבְלִים) can also mean clouds or water-skins, emphasizing containment and controlled release. This verse reveals God's meticulous governance—He doesn't merely unleash weather randomly but numbers each cloud and measures each rainfall precisely. The 'wisdom' required transcends mere counting to include understanding the purpose and timing of each cloud formation. This points to divine providence where nothing is random or wasteful; every drop of rain serves God's sovereign purpose (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Historical Context

Ancient peoples observed clouds for weather prediction but had no understanding of atmospheric physics or meteorology. Rain was mysterious, sometimes appearing from clear skies and sometimes withholding despite cloudy conditions. God's questions highlight human ignorance of these essential life-sustaining processes, emphasizing dependence on divine provision rather than human manipulation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God's precise control over weather phenomena inform your understanding of His providence in your circumstances?
2. What areas of your life seem as unpredictable as weather, and how does this verse speak to that uncertainty?
3. In what ways do you seek to 'number' or control what only God's wisdom can comprehend?

Interlinear Text

מִ שְׁמַיִם יַסְפֵּר שְׁמַךְ יְמִין בְּחִכְמַת הַנּוּבָל בְּנִירְבָּל מִשְׁפִּיבָן: מִ שְׁמַיִם יַסְפֵּר שְׁמַךְ יְמִין בְּחִכְמַת הַנּוּבָל בְּנִירְבָּל מִשְׁפִּיבָן: H4310 Who can number the clouds in wisdom the bottles of heaven H4310

מִ שְׁפִיבָן:
or who can stay
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Additional Cross-References

Psalms 147:4 (Parallel theme): He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.