

KEY

Archer = A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Gleason Archer). Chicago: Moody Press, 2007.

Ash = Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

BBC = The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

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Grudem = Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1994.

Harrison = Introduction to the Old Testament (R.K. Harrison). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

K&D = Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F. in the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.

Kaiser = Walter C. Kaiser in The Majesty of God in the Midst of Innocent Suffering.

Swindoll = A Man of Heroic Endurance: Job (Charles Swindoll). Nashville, TN. W Publishing Group, 2004.

Talbert = *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* (Layton Talbert). Bob Jones University Press, 2007.

TWOT = The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; Bruce Waltke). Chicago: Moody Press, 1980. Two Volumes.

Walton = Old Testament Today. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Basic English Diagram / Structure

3 Then

Job answered
the LORD

and said,

4

“Behold,
I am insignificant;
what can I reply to You?

[I lay my hand on my mouth.]

5

“Once I have spoken,
and I will not answer;
Even twice,
and I will add nothing more.”

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

Job 40:3-5 3 Then Job answered the LORD and said, 4 “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. 5 “Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add nothing more.”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

Bible Knowledge Commentary

I. GOD'S FIRST SPEECH (38:1–40:2)

UBS Handbook Series

I. God Challenges Job To Answer His Questions Job 38:1–3

Be Patient: Job (Warren W. Wiersbe)

III. Job's first response (Job 40:1–5)

The New American Commentary: Robert L. Alden

I. THE LORD FINALLY SPEAKS TO JOB (38:1–42:6)

D. Job's First Repentance (40:3–5)

Job (Charles Swindoll)

Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash)

C. Job's Response (40:3-5)

Biblical Studies: Job (Sam Storms)

I. God's First Speech—38:1–40:2

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

- I. God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? (38:1-40:2)
- II. Job's First Reply to God: I Am Insignificant (40:3-5)
 - A. Job's Admission (40:3-4)
 - B. Job's Declaration (40:5)

SERMON OUTLINE:

- II. God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? (38:1-40:2)
- I. Job's First Reply to God: I Am Insignificant (40:3-5)
 - A. Job's Admission: Short of Repentance (40:3-4)
 - 1. Verse 4 – "Insignificant" (better than the NIV's "unworthy") admits little
 - 2. Word "Behold" (v. 4) = Heb. hen ("behold"/"see"/"look" – Also "since" or "if")
 - 3. Job "lays his hand over his mouth" (cf. 21:5; 29:9)
 - B. Job's Declaration: Committed to Silence (40:5)
 - 1. Five reasons why I interpret this passage as I do:
 - a. The words Job uses are ambiguous
 - b. Job doesn't say anything that clearly indicates he's repentant
 - c. God continues his correction
 - d. Job's attitude is quite different in chapter 42
 - e. Some weighty scholars agree

Concluding Thoughts:

- 1. God knows your heart.
- 2. God is long-suffering with you.
- 3. We ought to be long-suffering with each other.
- 4. Repentance begins at the Cross.

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): Job's first reply to God

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about): in which he admits his insignificance before Him

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): Job's reply to God results in the deafening roar of silence

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: God hears the deafening roar of our silence.

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: Job's First Response to the God of the Whirlwind

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Until we are silenced before God, He can't do for us what needs to be done. As long as we defend ourselves and argue with God, He can't work for us and in us to accomplish His plan through us.

But Job was not quite broken and at the place of sincere repentance. He was silent but not yet submissive; so, God continued His address. [Warren W. Wiersbe]

One the preceding context:

We may begin with the observation that in Genesis 1 the commission to rule the animals goes hand in hand with the limitation of human diet to vegetation. Not until Genesis 9:3 is humankind portrayed as becoming carnivorous and, significantly, not until then (9:2) is the fear and dread of humankind felt by the animals. The implication is that the rule in Genesis 1 would have been experienced by the animals as benign (perhaps after the fashion exemplified by Yahweh in Job 38:39-39:30).

Such a protological vision in Genesis 1 finds an eschatological counterpart in the Isaianic tradition (a tradition, we may note, in which Davidic eventually Israelite royal function is thematic). At Isaiah 11:6-9, under the aegis of the wise and effective rule of the Messianic king, the relation between animals, and between animals and humans, is so peaceable that no longer will humans drive animals (Job 39:7b); on the verb cf. 3:18b), but a child shall lead them. It is as though the vision of Isaiah 11:1-9 includes a portrayal of a different sort of dominion over the animals—a wise dominion—than has been the case in history. This vision is picked up again in Isaiah 65:25; and it may be incipient in such places also as Isaiah 43:20. Within the schema of the canonical text, then, we may and indeed must speak of protological and eschatological counterpart visions. [Janzen, 240-41]

As far as speeches go, this is the shortest in the book.

The function of the speech is to signal Job's intention to give up the prosecution of his case. Its tonality, however, is not a little ambiguous: has Job reached a moment of enlightenment, or does he feel that all his worst fears—that he is destined never to receive an adequate response—have been realized? The absence of any note of regret and the reference to his previous speeches without any qualification of them suggest that he still stands by what he has said. Here the tonality seems in conflict with the literary form, for in the legal disputation it is usual for a resolution to be achieved by one of the parties abandoning the case (cf. Fohrer). Job, however, both gives up speaking and at the same time draws attention to his previous speeches as if they are still valid. [David J. A. Clines, Job 38–42, vol. 18B, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 1138]

VERSES 40:3-4

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said, 4 “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 4 “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

3 Then Job answered the LORD: 4 I am so insignificant. How can I answer You? I place my hand over my mouth.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

3 Then Job answered the LORD: 4 “I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said, 4 “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth.

This is Job’s first reply (cf. 42:1-6). It may be that Job’s heart wasn’t exactly where God wanted it to be, thus God’s second speech (and Job’s accepted repentance).

Behold emphasizes the importance of Job’s conclusion, in which he values himself as worthless. Many versions do not represent it in translation. I am of small account translates a verb meaning “to be swift, light, insignificant.” The verb is found in 7:6 and 9:25 (“are swifter”); 1 Samuel 2:30 (“be lightly esteemed”); Nahum 1:14 (“are vile”). Job is admitting that he is of little importance in God’s vast scheme of things. FRCL says “I am nothing at all,” NIV “I am unworthy” . . . [UBS Handbook]

A closer reading discloses an irreducible ambiguity in his words. The opening word, *hen*, does indeed often mean “behold;” but it can also mean “if,” introducing a hypothetical possibility as a ground on which a question is based. In such a case, the response may be translated, “Suppose / if I am of no account [as your questions all imply]; what shall I answer you?” [Jansen, 243]

Ambiguous.

What shall I answer thee? is Job's way of saying "There is nothing I can say to you." In some languages, when one speaks to a superior, as Job does here, it is necessary to avoid the use of the pronoun alone. In these cases Job may say "How can I answer you, God?" In verse 2 Job was given the choice of giving up or answering. His choice will have to be to give up, surrender, submit. I lay my hand on my mouth expresses the gesture of placing the fingers or hand over the mouth as a sign of silence. [UBS Handbook]

"Insignificant" = "light in weight" (in contrast to a word that means "heavy" or "weighty").

Putting his hand over his mouth was a gesture Job had suggested for his friends: "Look at me, and be astonished, And put your hand over your mouth." [21:5]

"Unworthy" translates qāl, "light in weight," as opposed to kābēd, "heavy/worthy/honorable." With a rhetorical question of his own, Job replied that he could not answer any of the questions. In a gesture of submission and surrender he covered his mouth, the same thing the "chief men" did toward him in the good old days Job described in 29:9. [Robert L. Alden]

Perhaps Job is announcing the withdrawal of his complaint; his decision not to proceed further.

Yet the wording of Job's brief reply does not suggest capitulation; if anything, it is a re-affirmation of his previous speeches. It is probably best to regard it as a first indication of how he will respond. Only in 42:4–6 will we hear his final decision; here he merely says that he will not further prosecute his case. [David J. A. Clines]

Job seemingly bites his tongue. He is sobered, but not humbled — at least not completely.

VERSES 40:5

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

5 “Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

5 I have spoken once, and I will not reply; twice, but now I can add nothing.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

5 I spoke once, but I have no answer— twice, but I will say no more.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

5 “Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.”

I have spoken once shows how Hebrew parallelism almost always has a smaller number in the first line than in the second. For a similar example with the numbers six and seven, see 5:19. In line b the increase is plus one, and so twice. This does not mean that Job has spoken two or three times, but “again and again,” “over and over,” or perhaps in this context “I have already said too much.” If the parallel lines are being retained, it is not necessary to keep the numerical device if that is not a natural figure in the translator’s language. For example, “I have spoken out, and so I will not say any more” or “I have said it too often, and now will say no more.” [UBS Handbook Series]

Seeing that man is not the world’s master, and that God controls and cares for His creation, Job acknowledged (a) his insignificance (unworthy comes from the verb q.ālal, “to be silent, trifling, small, insignificant”) and (b) his inability to defend himself further. His former self-confidence (“I will say to God, Do not condemn me,” 10:2; “Then summon me, and I will answer,” 13:22; “You will call and I will answer You,” 14:15) now was changed to humble submission (“how can I reply to You?”) [BKC]

“Once . . . twice” = cf. our idiom of “time and again.”

However, this response of the former plaintiff included no note of repentance. He was humbled, but not yet repentant. So God summoned him to answer more questions. [BKC]

Both [of God's speeches] are marked by contrition and regret that he said as much as he did, but the second and more expansive repentance contains the actual word "repent," which this one does not. Perhaps because it does not, the Lord continued the interrogation. [Robert L. Alden]

The $x + 1$ formula was an ancient Hebrew way of saying, "I have spoken once too many times already." The GNB reads, "I have already said more than I should." What Job had said in 9:9 came back to haunt him and confirm its truth, "Though one wished to dispute with him [God], he could not answer him one time out of a thousand." Job had outtalked Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; but in the presence of God he was dumbfounded, that is, dumb and confounded. [Robert L. Alden]

Note Job in 23:4 - "I would present my case before Him And fill my mouth with arguments. 13:13-16 13 "Be silent before me so that I may speak; Then let come on me what may. 14 "Why should I take my flesh in my teeth And put my life in my hands? 15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. 16 "This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence. 31:35-37 35 "Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; Let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 "I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him.

In saying that he has spoken once, indeed more than once (an example of "number parallelism"; cf. Watson, 145), Job seems to be affirming what he has previously said, not rescinding it. In saying that he will speak no more, he may only mean that he has said all that needs to be said. "He continues to stand behind his avowal of innocence" (Hartley). He certainly does not indicate any regret for what he has said. [David J. A. Clines]

Wilson too rightly recognizes that Job both refuses to press his case or to withdraw it, depicting Job's refusal to speak as the biblical equivalent of "taking the fifth" (invoking the Fifth Amendment in the US Constitution in order to avoid self-incrimination). The second divine speech will be by no means superfluous. [David J. A. Clines]

Job admits that he cannot answer, but he still does not admit to any sin, so there is no 'confession'. Nor does he retract any of his former statements, so there is no 'submission'. On the contrary, he seems to be sticking to his guns. He has already spoken once, and need say no more. Indeed he has already repeated himself (twice) and will not 'add' anything.²⁴ This suggests that Job has nothing to say that he has not already said. [Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 307-308]