

July 19th

Chapter 11, Zophar's first speech, (Learn, Read, Discuss)

Zophar accuses Job of evil by continuing to assert his innocence. Zophar views God's wisdom as utterly beyond human grasp, and Zophar wishes (as does Job) that God would speak directly to Job and tell him what Zophar already knows (that is, that no one can fully understand the depths of God's multifaceted wisdom). Zophar says in verse 6 that not only does Job deserve all that has befallen him based on God's utterly unknowable wisdom, but that God has actually let him off lightly! Zophar refers to Job as a wild ass in verse 12, essentially saying that even stupid humans can come to understand wisdom, but Job is beyond stupid –he's stubborn as a wild ass who refuses domestication. Zophar offers Job a way forward from his suffering –to change his heart, repent, and throw himself on God's mercy (the same way forward that Eliphaz and Bildad offered). But for Job, accepting his "friends'" solution to his problem would sacrifice his personal integrity. His stubbornness is in service to his righteous integrity as a person.

Chapter 12-14, Job's third response (Learn, Read, Discuss)

Beginning in chapter 12, Job stands up for himself in the face of the patronizing "care" that his friends have offered. He begins to pull holes in their arguments. The reality of life is contrary to the bulk of previously held wisdom and theology (especially from the deuteronomic tradition). You don't always get what you deserve. There are lots of examples, he says, of those who are evil resting in peace and safety, and lots of examples of those who are righteous and who should be respected and revered, instead being dishonored through no fault of their own. Where is the justice in the righteous, wise elder losing their faculties? Where is the justice in faithful kings being led away? Where is the justice where those who ARE wise do not have the power or authority to get their message out (as was the case for many of the prophets)? Job knows all the tired old wisdom maxims that his friends do, but he is striving throughout the whole course of this book to come to a new understanding of the relationship between God and humanity, given God's strength, wisdom, and justice. Is God's strength at odds with God's justice? Is God responsible for all of the chaos in the world, if so, where is the justice? These are the questions that Job begins to probe.

In Chapter 13, Job begins to pull holes in his "friends'" care for him. He calls them worthless physicians, and wishes they would have just kept

silent! Silence is wisdom. Job now turns the tables on his friends and warns them of bearing false witness against God. For if God's wisdom is truly unknowable, then how can any of them speak accurately and faithfully for God? 13:13 is a turning point in Job, where Job goes from genuinely wanting to die to living for his time in court with God. His driving force is now wanting to come face to face with God to defend himself. He believes that if God will but answer him and let him present his case, that he will be vindicated –for God does not allow the unrighteous into the divine presence, and he asks a few legal conditions of God so that a fair trial may proceed. Job begins a one-sided legal negotiation with God, and in chapter 14 begins to argue his case as if he were face to face with God.

In chapter 14, Job begins his points by stressing the brevity of human life, compared to mighty trees which can be renewed and reborn after being cut down. And, as human life is so frail, insignificant, and fleeting, Job questions why God even bothers bringing such a pitiable creature before the judgment seat. Job feels helpless and desperate, and yet he pours out his thoughts to God. In Job's mind, God has cut him off (though he does not know why), but Job most certainly has not broken the relationship from his side of things. Even while desperate and heartbroken, he still seeks to speak with God and to pour out his heart to God in spite of his anger with God. In verses 10-17, Job imagines with God what it would be like were he to die and be permitted to speak face to face with God beyond the grave. Job does not believe in life after death, though many ancient traditions did. Job expresses a sense of urgency to have his hearing with God in this life, but would gladly wait patiently for death if he knew that he could meet God face to face after his death. Vs. 18 sees Job come back down to reality, Job's reality that his longed for just and mutual relationship with God is and will continue to be out of his reach.