

4:17-21 The Vision: Man is feeble and frail

1. Richard Whitekettle, *When More Leads to Less*, Journal of Biblical Literature 129:3 (2010)

Scholars have found that one rhetorical function of a hyperbole or overstatement is to elicit a “corrective response” from an audience. That is, a person who recognizes something as an overstatement will mentally correct the overstated idea down to the proper level. Neither Job nor Eliphaz believed that a human being could be more righteous than Gd. Thus, when Job was asked whether this was possible in 4:17a, he would have recognized that it was a hyperbolic impossibility. He would, therefore, have responded by making the following downward correction in his mind: “No, a human being cannot be more righteous than Gd; a human being’s level of righteousness is not that high.” Having been compelled by the greater-than rhetorical question to move a human being in a downward direction on a scale of righteousness, Job would have been primed to continue this downward trend via the graded series of items in vv. 18–19. In the course of that series, Job was led to see that, in Eliphaz’s thinking at least, a human being belonged down past Gd, down past the angels, at a level of righteousness that was dramatically described as being amid the dust and moths (v. 19).

5:1-7 Outrage is self-defeating; Suffering is natural

2. Commentary of Malbim to 5:1, 5:3

אחר שהודיע התשובה שהשיג ע"ז בנבואה, אמר אליו בל יתפלא מדוע באתהו התשובה ע"י אליפז ולא בא הקדוש שהוא המלאך המגיע את הנבואה... שאחר שהיית אויל ומסופק בהשגחת ד' אינך ראוי שיופיע אליך דבר ד' וקדושי.

After relating the answer he had grasped prophetically, [Eliphaz] said, lest Job be surprised that the answer came via Eliphaz, and the holy one – the *malach* who brings the prophecy – did not come to him... Since you have been foolish, and you have doubted Divine supervision, you are not fit for Gd's word and for His holy ones to be manifest upon you.

3. Commentary of Ralbag to 5:2

הוא האיש אשר יכוין פעולותיו תכלית מה ולא יבא אל הגעת התכלית ההוא בסבות הראויות... ולזה יהיה כועס תמיד... ויהיה זה סבה שלא יתנהג בזה בסבות הראויות:

This is the person who guides his actions toward goals, but he does not reach the goal via proper steps... And therefore he is perpetually angry... And this is why he will not take proper steps.

4. Commentary of Malbim to 5:7

האדם נולד לעמול ביגיע כפיו, ובעמלו יביא לחמו, והעושה עושר שלא בעמל וביגיע כפיו הוא עמל ואון ולא יצמיח ולא יתקיים ביד בניו
Man is born to strain with his hands, and through his work to bring his bread. One who produces wealth without work is just producing struggle and corruption, and it will not grow and endure in the hands of his children.

5. Jon Burnight, *Job 5:7 as a Response to Job's Malediction (3:3-10)*, Journal of Biblical Literature 133:1 (2014)

In effect, Eliphaz is saying that Job, in seeking to eradicate the day of his birth with “gloom,” is speaking as one who venerates Resheph. Given this deity’s association with pestilence, his wording may also serve as an oblique reference to Job’s diseased condition. Job 5:7 might then be translated, “Man is born for trouble, and sons of Resheph exalt gloom.” Eliphaz goes on in 5:8 to contrast himself with Job, asserting that if he were in Job’s place, he would turn to Gd rather than invoke the forces of “darkness.”

5:8-16 Gd does wonderful things

6. Talmud, Taanit 10a

ארץ ישראל משקה אותה הקב"ה בעצמו, וכל העולם כולו על ידי שליח, שנאמר "הנתן מטר על פני ארץ ושלה מים על פני חוצות".
Gd waters Israel Himself, and the rest of the world via agent, as in Job 5:10.

7. Commentary of Malbim to 5:13

שעת יבחרו החכמים ערמה ותחבולה להרע לחבריהם, לא יפר את עצתם, רק יסבב בהשגחתו שהאמצעים שהכינו בעצתם להרע הם עצמם יהיו סבה לשיגיע ההפך. כמו שהיה באחי יוסף...

When wise people choose cleverness and strategies to harm others, He will not ruin their counsel. Rather, through His supervision He will cause the very means they prepared, in their plan to harm, to be the cause for the opposite to happen. As with the brothers of Joseph...

5:17-26 Gd protects people from harm

8. Seven and punishment Bereishit 4:15; Vayikra 26:14; Daniel 9:24

Eliphaz I, in review

9. Three points

- Suffering occurs for a reason, such as Divine rebuke
- Expressing outrage is foolish
- There is hope, if you turn to Gd

10. David Clines, *Job 5. 1-8: A New Exegesis*, Biblica 62, pp. 185-194 (1981)

[I]t is hard to believe that Eliphaz first proposes to Job a course of action [calling to "holy ones"] Job would not have thought of and then disappoints him by telling him either that it is futile or that it is wicked. It is much more likely that Eliphaz addresses himself to a course of action that he supposes Job to have in mind already... [T]his is the point at which Eliphaz profoundly misunderstands Job. Eliphaz cannot seriously believe that anyone would wish to die, and consequently he interprets Job's words as a plea for deliverance from his trouble into a calm and peaceful existence (cf. the picture painted by Eliphaz in 5.19-26). In short, Job himself has no wish to appeal to the 'holy ones' and in fact never does... whereas Eliphaz can only believe that someone in Job's position must harbour such an appeal.

11. Commentary of Rashi to 4:2

הבעבור שניסה דבר אליך, תלאה בנסיון אחד שניסך בוראך?

Because a test came to you, will you be exhausted with the one test with which your Creator tested you?

12. Carol Newsom, *Job and His Friends: A Conflict of Moral Imaginations*, Interpretations 53:3 (1999)

4:3-4 You helped others transcend *rogez*, and you can do it yourself

4:6 You have integrity, you will have a future

4:6-9 Two types of narrative: Disaster at the beginning, Disaster at the end

5:8 I would seek Gd, in your position

5:9-16 There are narratives in which Gd does great things

5:17-26 Incorporating the discordant into the narrative