

Dr. Kyle Dunham, Job, Eliphaz 2

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This is Dr. Kyle Dunham in his teaching on Eliphaz, the pious sage in Job. This is session number two, Eliphaz's Wisdom Theodicy in the Context of the Ancient Near East and Scripture.

In our earlier lecture, we looked at Eliphaz in the context of Edom and particularly the traditions of Edomite wisdom.

In this lecture, we want to look more specifically at some of those principal tenets that comprised his theology, his approach to wisdom, and to look at the key texts in the book of Job where he speaks to Job's situation and tries to bring him to a place of resolution to appease God and to repent of his sins. And so, I summarize Eliphaz's approach to theodicy which is reconciling the righteous suffering with the justice of God under three headings. The first is retribution theology, retribution theology.

There are a number of correlations between the book of Job and ancient Near Eastern wisdom. For instance, the principle of retribution was integral to the philosophical outlook of ancient Mesopotamia. In the mind of the ancients, there was no doubt about the existence of the gods of their pantheon and how those gods ruled over mankind.

Rather, the ideological struggle, which gave birth to ancient Near Eastern wisdom writings, was trying to integrate the understanding of God's role with observations regarding its seeming inconsistency in its outworking. In other words, it didn't seem to always come to fruition in the lives of people, these tenets of retribution. Van Torn says it this way, what is at stake in the Mesopotamian theodicy texts is the validity of the retribution model and the notion of divinity that it implies.

The Mesopotamian view had at its core a particular view of fate. Buccellati notes, that fate is not a personal God, but rather is an ultimate reference in conditioning the behavior of the gods. And so, this was often subsumed under a Sumerian word, me, which Walton says referred to these control attributes.

Walton says this, according to the common ancient Near Eastern principle of similarity, gods exceeded humans in strength, longevity, beauty, size, and appetite, but their emotions and values mirror those of their human servants. We can see this in several inscriptions from the ancient Near East that talk about the gods and their role in terms of ordering human behavior. There is one inscription that is mentioned along these lines, the Legend of Ere.

Ere it says in this inscription, arise Ere by laying waste the country, how relieved your mind will be, how much your heart will rejoice. Ere's limbs are weary like those of one who cannot fall asleep. Shall I get up? Shall I keep on lying? He wonders to his weapons, he says, stay in the racks, to the Sibiti unrivaled heroes back to your seats until you rouse him, Ere will lie in his chamber.

Ere experiences joy, fatigue, indecisiveness, and pleasure in much the same way humans do. In the area of retribution, one builds on this notion of likeness to posit further that gods and humans likewise share in the appreciation of social norms, which involve the ethics of beneficence toward others, especially those of lower class or position than oneself. This is, for example, seen in the Babylonian councils of wisdom in which retribution according to deeds is assumed to derive from the analogous moral assessment of the gods, particularly Shamash, who is responsible for the administration of justice.

It says this, do not insult the downtrodden. Do not sneer at them autocratically. With this, a man's God is angry.

It is not pleasing to Shamash who will repay him with evil. Thus, the gods valued charitable deeds toward the distressed but disapproved of scorn toward the needy. Pleasure or repulsion are the two poles, which move the god to action.

So, it was incumbent on the human to align his behavior with what was pleasing to his God. And from this understanding, the code of retribution naturally follows. If one is suffering, the God is revulsed.

If one is rewarded, the God is pleased. Personal observation becomes the means by which one is assessed to be pleasing or displeasing to god. Van Toren says it this way, according to the traditional theology of the Mesopotamian scholars, the doctrine of retribution is a law of nature, so to speak, that does not require an act of disclosure on the part of gods.

It rather can be viewed from observation, extrapolation, and speculation on the principle of similarity. Thus, the value judgment placed by the god on one's behavior was observable in the outward circumstances of one's life. Those who are happy and successful have been rewarded by the god.

Those who are despondent and suffering have been punished. This norm of retribution likewise undergirds much of the wisdom outlook promulgated by Job's friends, particularly Eliphaz, who is the archetype and the primary counselor in answering Job. These norms of ancient Near Eastern wisdom are embodied in his counsel.

For instance, early on, Eliphaz sets this tone in his first speech. In Job 4:6-8, he says, is not your fear of God your confidence and the integrity of your ways your hope? Remember who that was innocent ever perished or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. This passage provides the core of Eliphaz's retributive doctrine.

Herein one may discern in Eliphaz both personal observation as determinative for value judgment, he says, as I have seen, as well as the connection between deed and consequence, who that was innocent ever perished. Those who plow iniquity reap the same. The significance of personal observation and Eliphaz's interpretation of Job's plight becomes especially evident at the culminating close of his first speech.

In Job 5:27, Eliphaz says, behold, this we have searched out. It is true. Hear and know it for your own good.

In this second speech, Eliphaz provides an extended and eloquent discourse concerning the retribution requited upon the evil-doer. He uses analogies from war and famine to outline the evil doer's utter desolation. He sums up the plight of the wicked this way, for the company of the godless is barren.

Fire consumes the tents of bribery. They conceive trouble and give birth to evil. Their womb prepares deceit.

So, the impending destruction of the evil-doer is inexorable. In his final speech, Eliphaz applies this retribution principle unilaterally. Job is in agony precisely because of his sin.

Eliphaz says this, is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities. Yet he turns to Job and offers hope that if he turns back to God, good will come because the righteous are rewarded. He says this in verses 21 to 23 of his final speech, agree with God and be at peace.

Therefore, good will come to you. Receive instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up.

Thus, we can see that in his understanding of retribution, Eliphaz incorporates many of the same principles that align with the perspective in Mesopotamia, that the gods requite good or evil in observable behavior on the part of the sufferer. The second category beyond retribution theology would be appeasement through divine incantations, appeasement through divine incantations. Another area of concord between the perspective of Eliphaz and that of Mesopotamian wisdom is the use of prayer to rid oneself of evil and to regain the favor of the deity.

In Mesopotamia, these prayer formulae took the form of incantations, which were spoken aloud by the religious specialist to extirpate the evil, which had befallen the victim so as to ritually purify him. Prayers or incantations were the means to regain the favor of the gods. The counselor in the Babylonian Theodicy admonishes the sufferer this way, seek the kindly wind of the god. What you have lost in a year, you will make up in a moment.

One of the notable incantation series in the ancient Near East is the Sherpu Incantations. And these are prescribed when the sufferer does not know how he has offended the god or the existing world order.

In response to his plight, the sufferer is to give or delineate a long list of possible sins, ranging from violation of religious taboos to violations of societal moral norms. The victim additionally adds requests for release from inadvertent oaths, which may have conjured up evil occultic powers against him. One scholar has said it this way, what is interesting is that when the rights are described, all possible offenses are listed as being absolved by those rights.

It is obvious that the victim that requires these services has not committed so many offenses. The prevalent theme rather is not knowing what transgression a man has done, or what evil he is guilty of. He simply enumerates all the possibilities.

In the incantation, the sufferer acknowledges both his culpability before the god and his ignorance of the misdeed. In the Sherpu Incantation, the sufferer says this, or the priest rather, he does not know what is a crime against God. He does not know what is a sin against the goddess.

He scorned the God. He despised the goddess. His sins are against his gods.

His crimes are against his goddess. After pointing out this inadvertent scorn that he's received from the god, the sufferer goes on to confess a litany of sins perpetrated against other people. Although it is certain that in reality, he didn't commit all these deeds, he enumerates them as personal sins.

He confesses to family strife and hatred, lying, deceptive business dealing, removing boundary markers, extortion, immorality, murder, oppression of the needy, gossip, sorcery, violation of religious taboos, neglect of the gods, political insubordination, and broken vows. He says things like, he took money that was not due him. He disinherited the legitimated son.

He put on his neighbor's clothes. He did not clothe a young man when he was naked and so on. The incantation ends with an appeal to over 50 gods in the Pantheon to release the evil, followed by a final plea to the God and the goddess.

A similar one would be the Dinger Shadiba Incantations, which are a series of incantations which were ascribed to appease an angry God. Lambert says the purpose of these is this. He says the point of these prayers in every case is derived from the misfortune or suffering of the speaker.

It is presumed that this had occurred and that the personal God was angry. His anger then had to be appeased. The sufferer again, seems unaware of the exact crimes he has committed, but he lists all possibilities to explore ways to resolve the crisis.

He's to confess this, my iniquities are many. I know not what I did. My God expunge, release, suppress the anger of your heart.

Disregard my transgressions, receive my prayers, and turn my sins into virtues. The victim pleads for clemency with the deity and view of the universality of sin. He says, in respect of offense, iniquity, transgression, and sin, I've offended against my God, sinned against my goddess.

He then goes on to enumerate specific sins in an effort to gain the god's favor. He says, I committed an offense against the god who created me. I did an abomination, ever doing evil.

I coveted abundant property. I desired precious silver. In the book of Job, the friends also seem to suggest that Job may be restored by means of a divine incantation.

We see this in several ways. First, as in the methodology of these incantations, Eliphaz repeatedly reminds Job to turn to God in prayer. In his first speech, Eliphaz exhorts Job, as for me, I would seek God and to God, I would commit my cause.

He follows this up with the insistence that submission to God brings blessing. In chapter five, verse 17, he says, behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves. Therefore, despise not the discipline of the Almighty.

Although not using the explicit terminology of prayer, the suggestion is that if Job would submit to the ways of God, by inference, if he would humbly pray, all would be well. Nevertheless, Job is belligerent. So, Eliphaz must return with a warning in his second speech regarding Job's perilous refusal to submit in prayer.

In chapter 15, verses 12 and 13, Eliphaz says, why does your heart carry you away? Why do your eyes flash that you turn your spirit against God and bring such words out of your mouth? The implication is that rather than obtaining reconciliation through acquiescent prayer, Job is further offending God by his continual outbursts. In the third speech, Eliphaz returns to his more urbane urging of Job to call upon God. He gives an extended call to prayer in the climax of his speech.

In chapter 22, verses 21 to 23, agree with God and be at peace. Therefore, good will come to you. Receive instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart.

If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up. Eliphaz follows with one final plea for the happy outcome that awaits penitential prayer. You will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God.

You will make your prayer to him and he will hear you. You will pay your vows. It is clear that Eliphaz understands that resolution to Job's plight rests in restorative prayer, likely modeled after the incantational prayers that are given by the pious sufferers in these accounts.

Additionally, one other factor becomes significant. The Mesopotamian incantation series provides insight into Eliphaz's most pointed confrontation with Job. In his third speech, Eliphaz delineates to Job a lengthy list of evils, which Job has committed.

He says, for you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have given no water to the weary to drink. You have withheld bread from the hungry.

The man with power possessed the land and the favored man lived in it. You have sent widows away empty and the arms of the fatherless were crushed. Job 22.6-9. In light of the incantation series, it's likely that since Job has refused to confess any sins to God, what Eliphaz is doing is providing some prodding.

Rather than merely an outline of sins, which he imagines Job to have committed, Eliphaz seems to be preparing the way for Job's reversal by offering a list of generic evil acts to which Job might concede. In doing so, Job is assured that he'll be restored to divine approval if he simply admits to evil, known or unknown. The third category that I would see Eliphaz as embodying parallel to Mesopotamian wisdom would be mantic wisdom.

A final link between the scribes and sages of Mesopotamia and Job's friends is mantic wisdom. Wisdom is associated with special revelation from the divine realm. Torn again, emphasizes the importance that divination occupied in the wisdom perspective of Mesopotamia.

He says that, the traditional science of divination was claimed to have a celestial origin. It was traced back to Enma Druranki, once king of Sippar, who owed his knowledge to a heavenly revelation. Divination formed a connection between the wisdom of practical affairs and the mysteries of the cult.

The wise was the initiate who was able to span that gap successfully. Divination provided insight into the nature of reality, thus creating a revelatory means of

acquiring knowledge of the mundane yet unalterable aspects of reality. One scholar has noted, that rather than an attempt to bend reality, divination may be viewed as the ability to perceive the laws, which link the various aspects of reality.

Lester Grabb has said it this way, the sage overlaps the supernatural and mundane spheres in the same way it overlaps the functions of priests, prophets, diviners, and the like. We see this in several texts of the ancient Near East, in which wisdom is tied to revelation from the supernatural realm. The sufferer in *Ludlu bel nemeqi* recognizes the significance of divination as a means of restoration and therefore appeals to this means as an avenue for appeasement of the offended God.

Ludlu bel Nemeqi says this, the omen organs are confused and inflamed for me every day. The omen of the diviner and dream priest does not explain my condition. The diviner with his inspection has not gotten to the root of the matter, nor has the dream priest with his libation elucidated my case.

I sought the favor of the spirit, but he did not enlighten me. And the incantation priest with his ritual did not appease divine wrath. This special knowledge of divination could occur through various means.

One was through dreams in which the god revealed himself. For instance, the sufferer in *Ludlu bel Nemeqi* has revealed to him through a series of dreams that Marduk intends to restore him. He describes the spectral aura of the dream experience.

He says this, his hand was heavy upon me. I could not bear it. My dread of him was alarming.

His fierce countenance was a tornado. He stood over me. My body was numbed.

Interestingly, as part of this dream experience, an incantation priest is used to deliver to the sufferer, the good news that Marduk has seen fit to restore him. It says this, an incantation priest carrying a tablet, Marduk has sent me. I have brought prosperity from Marduk's pure hands.

I have brought prosperity. So, a dream experience was an important part of revelation from the divine realm and an integral component in Mesopotamian wisdom. In the Babylonian theodicy, the sage counselor likewise recognizes the significance of the protective spirit realm.

It says, he who waits on his God has a protecting angel. For the sufferer in *Ludlu*, the only certain solution to his predicament was intercessory prayer to the God, counsel, which sounds strikingly similar to the counsel offered by Eliphaz. For myself, I gave attention to supplication and prayer.

To me, prayer was discretion, sacrifice my rule. These means of restitution were the only hope for the hapless sufferer. And in the book of Job, we see a similar reality.

The leading counselor among Job's friends recounts in his opening speech, a unique experience of revelation in which he received a message from the spirit realm, from an apparition that appeared to him during the middle of the night. It says in chapter four, now a word was brought to me stealthily. My ear received the whisper of it.

Amid thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, dread came upon me in trembling, which made all my bones shake. He describes his visitor as a spirit and a form. Given the similarities in Eliphaz's description of his nocturnal visit to the descriptions in Ludlu bel nemeqi, it is quite likely that Eliphaz experienced a dream.

The dream provides an extraordinary revelatory context to communicate to Eliphaz the truth about the universality of human sinfulness. Eliphaz leverages this experience to heighten his credibility and to add weight to his counsel. Eliphaz's use of special revelation is unusual in the corpus of Hebrew wisdom literature.

It's not often that sages report visits in the night from the spirit realm. Eliphaz's use of this, however, makes sense against the backdrop of Mesopotamian wisdom. The similarities provide further suggestion that Eliphaz is operating from within the tradition of Mesopotamian wisdom.

In addition, Eliphaz makes allusion to the departure of the benevolent angel from Job, a certain sign that the deity is displeased. At the midpoint of his first speech, Eliphaz alludes to the sufferer's loss of angelic wisdom, and angelic intercession. He says in Job 5:1, call now, is there anyone who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn? There are other hints of this idea along the way in his speeches.

For example, in expounding on his idea of remedial suffering, Eliphaz appears to suggest protection from demons who are feared as wreaking destruction on mankind. In chapter five, he says, you will be hidden from the lash of the tongue and shall not fear destruction when it comes. At destruction and famine, you shall laugh.

This protection likely comes from the presence of a protective spirit or angel who watches over the upright and sustains the favor of God. Perhaps an illusion is also to be found in Eliphaz's promise of restoration to Job if Job should heed his counsel. You will pray to him and he will hear you.

Job 22:26. given the utter transcendence of Eliphaz's deity, one may posit that this is accomplished through the protection of a spirit being. Lastly, Eliphaz appeals to

intercessory prayer as the only certain means of restitution. He says, as for me, I would seek God and to God, I would commit my cause.

In the final entreaty of his third speech, Eliphaz offers one final solicitation. He says, agree with God and be at peace, thereby good will come to you. As a result, you will make your prayer to him and he will hear you.

You will pay your vows. Eliphaz's counsel is conspicuously similar to the approach of the sufferer in Lulu Bel-Nemehi and these other ancient Near Eastern works of theodicy. This suggests that Eliphaz is firmly grounded in the Mesopotamian wisdom tradition, which I have argued would be exemplified in the Edomite wisdom tradition of which he was a part.

Now, when we come to the speeches of Eliphaz in the biblical texts, we need to highlight some things that are key and significant in understanding the message that he intends to convey. As I looked at the various Eliphaz speeches and studied their reception history throughout the interpretation of the church, as well as early Second Temple Jewish literature, I came to the conclusion that there were several facets of Eliphaz that were turning points upon which interpreters either came down on Eliphaz as a harsh critic or as a benign sage. And so, there were eight different categories that interpreters tended to look at to determine whether Eliphaz was to be seen as a favorable character or an unfavorable character.

I'm arguing that it's something in the middle. He's more of a favorable character than an unfavorable character in the sense that he's rooted in the wisdom traditions of Mesopotamia, but ultimately his wisdom is deficient. And so, a function in the book is to show that even the best of human wisdom traditions falls short to fully grasp the implications of innocent, righteous suffering as grappling with it in the context of God's righteousness and justice.

So, here are the factors that interpreters looked at. They looked at the tone of Eliphaz. We see in the tone of his speeches, he begins in a way that seems mild and gentle, but by the end of the speeches, he's accusing Job of a list of sordid sins.

So, understanding his tone is one aspect. Another thing that interpreters have looked at is the larger purpose and role of Eliphaz in his position among the characters of Job. In other words, did he set an example, a paradigm for the others? And if so, how does that relate to his importance in the book? Others looked at the nature of the theological creed underpinning his theodicy.

In other words, what were the theological tenets that were driving him? And then one of the key aspects was the nature, purpose, and value of Eliphaz's retributive doctrine, especially looking at Job 4. In fact, I would go so far as to say, this is sort of the watershed passage. How you understand Eliphaz in Job 4.5-11 really determines

how you perceive him as a character in the book. Other factors were also important, of course, looking at this angelic or spirit interaction during his dream vision encounter in Job 4.12-21. Looking at how he talks about remedial suffering in chapter five.

So, he's talking about suffering as a means of good and growth. And then looking at his status as the leading interlocutor and the elder statesman. In chapter 15, in his second speech, he appeals to wisdom traditions and it seems to place him as a status of elder statesman among the sages.

And so, it tends to lead to a higher view of him if that's understood in that context. Also looking at how Eliphaz uses this so-called sin list in chapter 22. I mentioned this earlier, he goes through a list of sins, seemingly as a model for Job to confess.

So, understanding what his purpose is in doing that. And then of course, looking at why Yahweh rebukes him at the end of the book. In Job 42.7, Yahweh tells Job that the friends have not spoken rightly concerning him.

So, what I would like to do is briefly look at some of the key tenets of these speeches that Eliphaz gives and read through some of the key texts that would help us to understand what's going on. Job's first speech encompasses chapters four and five. Most commentators and interpreters recognize that there are essentially two sections here and they fall fairly neatly into the chapter divisions.

The first section would be chapter four, two to 21, and the second section, chapter five, one to 27. These sections are usually classified under the genre of disputation speech. This is defined as an argument between two or more parties who hold to differing points of view.

This is typical of the dialogue among wise men, and sages who are contending for a premise. It also occurs between litigants in court, as well as often between the prophets and the people when the prophets come to confront them about covenant violations. Following the introductory formula, which occurs at the beginning of each of Eliphaz's speeches, which is then Eliphaz answered and said that chapter four has two larger stanzas with four sub-stanzas.

We can classify it this way. There are essentially four parts to chapter four. Eliphaz begins by admonishing Job in verses two to four on the basis of his past righteous deeds that hope lies ahead for him if he should repent and submit.

So, right from the outset, Eliphaz is attempting to move Job toward a place of divine appeasement, toward a place of resolution by repentance and renunciation of his sins. In the second part, chapter four, verses five to 11, this provides the essence of Eliphaz's retributive argument that the innocent cannot perish as the wicked do. And

this is an inflexible tenet for Eliphaz that there are clear distinctions between the righteous and the wicked.

The righteous simply cannot perish as the wicked do. In chapter four, verses 12 to 16, we see the third part. This is where Eliphaz relates his auditory dream vision that took place during the night.

And in this section, he's bringing in divine revelation, this mantic wisdom to substantiate the validity of his counsel. He's essentially saying, I know this is true because not only am I saying it, but I've received special revelation from the realm of the spirit world. And then the fourth part is chapter four, verses 17 to 21.

And there we see the content of this special revelation, which Eliphaz receives from the spirit. In chapter five, there are three stanzas and we'll get to that in a moment. In those stanzas, he talks about the outcome if Job fails to repent and fails to receive divine appeasement.

In the first part, going back to chapter four, I want to focus for a moment on verses five to 11. In this section, Eliphaz outlines the principal theological tenets of his retributive doctrine. This section is marked in verse five by a contrastive conjunction, along with a transition from Job's past deeds to his present situation.

This shift provides Eliphaz an opportunity to expound on his doctrine of retribution. It ends in verse 11, as Eliphaz uses an analogy of wild lions to support his observation regarding divine retribution in human affairs. As argued earlier, the manner in which an interpreter reads this section determines largely how he understands Eliphaz.

The lead counselor in this section outlines his thesis and corroborates it with pointed illustrations from nature, especially focusing on lions. There is hope for Job should he repent due to the inscrutable reality that only the wicked perish. Job is limping down the path to perdition, but he has an opportunity to reverse course if he acquiesces to the offended deity.

This course of action alone will assuage God's wrath and restore Job to a life of blessing. Eliphaz begins this section, But now it comes to you and you cannot make due. It touches you and you become dismayed.

Surely your fear is your source of confidence and the integrity of your ways is your hope. Remember who that was innocent ever perished or where have the upright been effaced? Just as I have seen those who plow wickedness and sow trouble reap the same. By the breath of God they perish and by the gust of his anger, they come to nothing.

The roaring of the lion, the sound of the savage lion and the teeth of the young lions are broken. The lion perishes for lack of prey and the cubs of the lioness are scattered. In this section, Eliphaz sets the tone of the eloquent ancient Near Eastern counselor.

He is going to lead the sufferer back to a correct view of his sin and back ultimately to a necessary capitulation to the offended deity. To add persuasive sophistication to his argument, Eliphaz employs imagery observed from natural and predictable patterns of agriculture and animal life. In some ways, this anticipates the later Yahweh speeches.

These are included by the sage to bolster his teaching on the fate of the wicked and to augment the need for Job to repent, to mollify the angered deity. And they're anchored in themes common to the ancient Near East and the context from which he emerges. The next significant section of Eliphaz's speeches are the nocturnal dream vision, which takes place in chapter four, verses 12 to 16.

Verse 12 is the introduction of a sub-stanza. This is clearly marked by a shift of topic as well as verses 12 to 16 form an inclusio. Eliphaz begins here to incorporate his visionary experience with a brief description of the encounter he's had with a spirit being.

In verse 12, he says, A word came to me stealthily. My ears caught only a whisper of it amid alarming thoughts arising from the visions of the night. When deep sleep falls upon men, dread came over me and trembling.

My entire frame shook. A spirit glided past my face. It made the hair of my flesh stand on end.

It stood still, but I could not recognize its features. A form was before my very eyes, a hush, and then I heard a voice. This vivid dream encounter comprises this section of Eliphaz's first speech.

He depicts here his brush with the divine. And this is one of the most extraordinary passages, really in all of Scripture. He says that it's a word coming to him secretly.

This is a rather uncommon term. It came to him stealthily or furtively. Some posit this is a technical term for revelation, but the abnormal description of the revelation seems to tell against that.

Rather, he seems to simply be saying, that God has given him some revelation through the means of this spirit being, which had a startling psychosomatic effect on him. He goes on to describe these disquieting thoughts that arose from the vision. In

doing so, many have compared this occasion with a word for deep sleep in Scripture that elsewhere is used for an encounter with the divine.

Notably, Abraham himself falls into a deep sleep in Genesis 15 when the Lord Yahweh appears to him. In Genesis 15:12, Abraham, the narrator describes this, and there are some striking similarities to Eliphaz's portrayal. In Genesis 15.12, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham, and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

Both Genesis and the Job account use this term for deep sleep to describe the divine revelatory context. Both records depict the emotive element of terror. And so, there's likely an interrelation here between these descriptions.

These are likely intended to suggest that Eliphaz's dream encounter is rooted significantly in the ancient Near Eastern context in which God reveals himself through deep sleep and a dream. Eliphaz describes this as dread overtaking him, his bones shaking. He refers here to his entire body.

He says that his hairs stand on end. And in so doing, he significantly relays how this message impacted him and the message that he's delivering to Job. The next part of this is where he relays to his audience the substance of what was revealed to him.

This takes place in the next several verses, beginning in verse 17. The Spirit gives a message to Eliphaz that he then relays to those around him. In verse 17, he says, How can a mortal human be just before God? How can a man be clean before his maker? If God does not trust his servants and attributes folly to his angels, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, which have a foundation of dust, they are liable to be crushed like a moth in the space of dawn to dusk, they may be pulverized.

They would perish forever without anyone noticing. Would they not die if their tent cord were plucked up, yet not because of wisdom? The content of the special revelation delivered to Eliphaz has sometimes been described as trite.

It expounds again on this recurrent motif of divine retribution as crucial to Eliphaz. That is to say, God rewards and punishes the righteous and the evil in accordance with their deeds. And so, this spirit being comes to Eliphaz and he pronounces this and Eliphaz relays that then to Job and to the others.

The last part of Eliphaz's first speech that is significant is his psalm admonishing repentance and the acceptance of divine reproof. In chapter 5, Eliphaz ends his first speech with an eloquent and moving final appeal to Job to accept divine reproof, to confess his sins, and thereby to regain divine favor. In much the same way as these

Mesopotamian counselors, Eliphaz says, that Job has lost divine favor because of some sin that has overtaken him.

But if he confesses it, God will restore him. Eliphaz says this, behold, how blessed is the man whom God reproves. So do not reject the chastening of the Almighty for he causes pain, but he binds up, he strikes, but his hands heal.

From six troubles he will deliver you and in seven, no evil will touch you. In famine, he has redeemed you from death, and in battle from the blow of the sword, from the lash of the tongue you will be hidden and you will not fear when devastation comes. He goes on to describe this in detail, how Job will be delivered, and how his descendants will multiply.

And then he ends with an appeal to his wisdom tradition. Behold this, we have searched it out and it is true. You had better listen and apply it for your own good.

In saying this, Eliphaz is drawing from the conceptual currency of ancient Near Eastern thought. His theme concerns the salutary effect that accompanies confession of sin. God has been offended with Job, but if Job simply confesses, the Lord will restore his favor.

Although Job expounds upon the chastening of God as having an ameliorative effect, there also seems to be underlying here, an element of caprice attributed to the deity. There's a bit of an arbitrariness that is assigned to God. This is true in verses 17 and 18.

He causes pain but binds up, he strikes, but he heals. The point is, the sufferer cannot know how God has been offended. So, the sufferer must simply acquiesce.

He must repent. He must confess his sin, acknowledge that God is supreme and sovereign, and acknowledge that the laws of retribution were true in his particular case. And in doing so, he will again, receive favor from God.

Moving then to his second speech, we come to Job 15. And in Job 15, he again, emphasizes both retribution theology and divine revelation. The genre of this second speech is again, disputation speech.

Following a customary introduction, Eliphaz's second speech has two stanzas in verses two through 19. Eliphaz reprimands Job for his apparent refusal to submit to the friend's counsel and to accede to what to him is the obvious divine displeasure he's experiencing by means of appeasement. In other words, Job is refusing to heed Eliphaz's counsel.

This section may be characterized as a semi-chiasm in which Eliphaz alternates between ridiculing Job by asking a series of rhetorical questions and by outrightly accusing him of sin. He ridicules through rhetorical questions, then he accuses of sin. And then he ends by summarizing his own qualifications to be a wisdom teacher.

In the second part of the speech, which is verses 20 through 35, Eliphaz turns once again to his retributive doctrine by warning Job from the hallowed counsels of Edomite wisdom, a tradition of which Eliphaz is a dignified proponent. I want to focus here on verses seven and the following of this second speech. And here in this section, the counsel that Eliphaz offers, were you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills? Have you listened in on the counsel of God? Have you so hoarded wisdom to yourself? What do you know that we do not? What do you discern that is not apparent to us? Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us greater in days than your father.

Are the consolations of God too few for you? Even the word intended for a gentle end? Why does your heart carry you away? Why do you flash your eyes? For you turn your spirit against God, spewing such words from your mouth. He goes on to describe that Job is not pure because no man is pure. God does not trust his holy ones.

How much worse that which is abhorred and corrupt. He goes on to say, what we are telling you is what wise men have declared and have not hidden from their fathers. In this section, Eliphaz is much more pointed in his assertions.

He's indignant in his counsel that Job has refused his offer to help him achieve divine appeasement. In ridiculing Job through this series of rhetorical questions, he's essentially undermining Job's refusal to comply. He's saying, what is your wisdom that you so glibly refuse to follow what I've counseled you to do? And he appeals here to this idea of the first man.

He says, were you the first man ever born? This construction probably means the first of mankind or the first man, Adam. Some have connected this to myths about Adam, but it's likely that Eliphaz is simply saying, are you so wise as to be as wise as the first man? In the ancient world, that which was ancient was perceived as possessing dignity and authority. That which was recent was of questionable derivation.

And so, Eliphaz is saying, how can you claim to be so wise? Are you as wise as the first man? And the implication is, of course not, that Job is not only foolish, but he's wicked and refusing to comply with Eliphaz's counsel. This then brings us to the third speech in Job 22. The third speech is one in which Eliphaz appeals to divine incantation and the repudiation of sin.

In this third speech, he's also giving a disputation speech, but here he incorporates, as in the first discourse, several elements of a hymn. His style becomes reminiscent of the Psalms. The structure of the speech is difficult to classify.

It consists of an opening series of rhetorical questions in verses two through five, followed by the main body of the speech. Some partition this into five subunits, which consist of Eliphaz in the first part specifying accusations against Job. He's specifying what the sins are that Job has committed.

And then he goes on to threaten Job that if he continues to refuse to comply, that evil will follow. He goes on to accuse Job of wrongly claiming that God is ignorant, of warning Job based on the end of the wicked, and then finally instructing Job with a conditional promise of restoration. If he seeks divine approval through appeasement, God will turn in favor to him.

I want to read a portion of this beginning with his series of rhetorical questions, beginning in verse two. Can a man be useful to God? Indeed, can the insightful be useful to him? Is it any delight to the Almighty if you are righteous? Does he profit when you are upright in your ways? Is it because of your piety that he would arraign you entering into litigation with you? Is not your wickedness great, your iniquity limitless? For you have gratuitously taken pledges from your brothers. The garment of the naked you have stripped.

You have denied water to drink to the faint. You have withheld food from the hungry. To the man of strength, the land belonged, the prejudiced man lived in it.

Yet you have sent away widows empty-handed. The arms of orphans were crushed. Therefore, snares encircle you, suddenly dread dismays you.

Eliphaz turns in this passage to his prescribed ritual by which Job may regain favor with the offended God. Job is to follow Eliphaz's lead in this section by confessing to sins known or unknown, which he may have committed. In doing so, the implication is that as Job admits his sin, his wickedness, God will in turn, turn to Job in favor and remove his disfavor.

In verses 11 and 12, he goes on to talk about darkness and water encompassing Job. Whether or not there is darkness, you do not see. A flood of water encompasses you.

Is not God high in the heavens? See how lofty the stars are. Here he symbolizes this relentless despair that has engulfed Job through the imagery of turbulent, dark, and frigid waters, imagery that is connected elsewhere to Sheol and the watery tumult and dismal darkness. From this imagery, Eliphaz shifts then to a hymn exalting divine transcendence.

The wicked pronounced to God, leave us alone. We have no desire to know your ways. Who is the Almighty that we should serve him? And Eliphaz implies that Job is part of that wicked class.

His only hope is to turn to God in acquiescence, repentance, and submission. And by doing so to again, regain God's favor. So, in short, I would argue that Eliphaz, as he moves through his three speeches, focuses on several key tenets.

That is retribution theology, his source of wisdom authority in his special revelation, his prescribing of divine incantation and appeasement, and his emphasis that Job needs to repudiate his sin and submit to God. And in doing so, he will find divine favor. This brings us then to the conclusion and this final passage where Yahweh rebukes Eliphaz in the other friends.

And the question becomes, why is Eliphaz particularly pointed out here in the rebuke? In this section in Job 42.7, Yahweh tells Job that Eliphaz and the other friends have sinned. Job 42.7 and 8 read this way. Now, after Yahweh had spoken these words to Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz, the Temanite, my anger burns against you and against your two friends because you have not spoken to me what is right as my servant Job has.

And now take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer a burnt offering for yourselves. Job, my servant will pray for you for I will regard his prayer not to deal with you in keeping with your folly for you have not spoken to me what is right as my servant Job has. A lot of discussion has centered on this text in seeking to determine what is the meaning of these verses. How do they relate to the preceding human and divine speeches? And what is the nature of the censure that Yahweh pronounces against Eliphaz and the other friends? Even why is he silent concerning Elihu? Key issues relate to the meaning of the phrase, to me, sometimes translated as concerning me or about me, as well as the direct object, what is right, that you have not spoken what is right to or about me.

Although Yahweh proclaims that Eliphaz and the two friends have not spoken rightly about or to me as his servant Job had, still Job himself has been rebuked by Yahweh in the Yahweh speeches. For instance, in Job 38.2, Yahweh says, who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? And Job goes on to repent in 42:1-6. The nagging question becomes the way in which Job has spoken rightly about God, but the friends have not. How is the content or form of Job's speeches superior to that of the friends? And what specifically are the friends reprovved for? More precisely, the pertinent issue lies in the nature of Eliphaz's censure and how this rebuke clarifies his role and purpose in the book, as well as what it says about his theological position.

Most commentators have traditionally taken the phrase, a lie or to me to signify concerning me. One scholar, for instance, argues that the meaning is of me and points to Genesis 20:2, Abraham spoke of Sarah, his wife. In a similar way, Edward Dorm points to Jeremiah 40:16 as an illustration for the meaning of speaking on the subject of someone.

You are telling a lie about Ishmael. With this interpretation, Yahweh rebukes Eliphaz and the other friends, primarily for the content of their speeches, and what they've said about God. They've not spoken rightly because their theological orientation by implication is mistaken and their approach to Job is injurious.

Recent discussion, however, by Daniel Timmer has countered persuasively that the meaning of the phrase ought rather to be translated to me. And that this best suits the context for several reasons. He suggests then that the rebuke pertains more so not to what the friends have said, but rather to what they have not said.

We see this from several angles. First, the preposition 'el, which is used here, is used three times after the speaking verb in the immediate context. The first occurrence is determinative for the subsequent uses.

In verse seven, the narrative says, now, after Yahweh had spoken these words to Job. And this phrase uses both the word for speaking, devar, as well as this preposition 'el. The meaning of the preposition in this first phrase is clearly to.

Yahweh has said little or nothing about Job in the preceding, but he has directed his speeches to Job. And most translations render it this way. As the immediate context, this usage is determinative for the two subsequent occurrences in the following verses.

Yahweh is reproving Eliphaz and the other friends for not speaking rightly to him, since Job has spoken rightly to him by repenting of his rash pronouncements. Second, the ancient versions support, or at least do not contradict the meaning of to for the preposition in this verse and point away from a meaning of concerning. For example, the Septuagint renders this with enopian, which suggests before or to, and the Vulgate has quorum, which also suggests before as spatial locative, rather than as concerning or about me.

Third, a study of the occurrences of the verb devar to speak with the preposition 'el to in Job prove or demonstrate that a dative of indirect object is indeed in view each time, rather than a meaning of concerning. Timmer argues that such is the case pervasively with this construction throughout the Hebrew scriptures. Fourth, an important clue to the meaning of this phrase is found in the relation of this statement to the critique of Job found in the divine speeches.

These occur in chapters 38 to 41. Yahweh has already dealt with and reproved Job's words in his two extended confrontational discourses. This fact has two implications for the meaning of these verses 42:7 and 8. Yahweh's reference here to what Job has said correctly, vis-a-vis what the three friends have said, likely does not refer to what Job has uttered in the dialogue as that would be anachronistic and inconsistent.

Yahweh has already addressed the content of those speeches in his earlier discourses. It seems more likely that he is referring to the immediately preceding utterance, namely Job's extended repentance in 42.1 to 6. Number two, since Job rebukes, since Yahweh rebukes Job earlier for the content of his speeches, it's very unlikely that he now indicates approval of their content as compared with the content of the friend's speeches. In other words, it's unlikely that he would now be saying he approved of what Job said since earlier he seems to have rebuked Job in his opening discourse.

These factors point in the direction of finding a solution in the more immediate context of Job's repentance in verses 1 to 6. Then finally, looking at that phrase, what is right, that the friends have not said what is right to me. This also supports the view that Job's repentance in verses 1 to 6 is in view. This participle when used with a term of speaking is used in only a handful of cases and refers unequivocally to what is certain, settled, established, or trustworthy.

In Genesis 41, the term refers to a word or matter that is made certain by God. In Deuteronomy 13 and 17, it's a word or statement that is trustworthy and certain, therefore binding in a legal case. Psalm 5 speaks of the evildoer in which no truth that is nothing trustworthy or certain is found in his mouth.

The opposite of what is settled or trustworthy in this context is folly, which is foolish. The latter term is used twice in Job, one of Job's wife, who is behaving the part of the foolish woman in 2:10 and as a reference to the senseless fools who mock Job's misfortune in chapter 30, verse 8, Eliphaz and the other friends, as Timur acknowledges, are not described as having said what is foolish. Their folly is not having spoken the truth as Job did.

So then if Job has been rebuked earlier by Yahweh for the content of his speeches, as we have suggested, what then is the trustworthy or certain statement that Job has made in distinction from the friends? It seems that from the context, it refers to his extended statement of repentance in verses 1 to 6. The friends are charged with not speaking certain and trustworthy words to Yahweh because they have not humbled themselves to repent at the site of the theophany as Job has, and have not yet been rebuked for the hubris with which they approached Job and arrogated to themselves the roles of divine spokesmen. So, the indictment, which Yahweh levels at Eliphaz seems to have to do more with his haughtiness and failing to humble himself before Yahweh in repentance. As the counselor seeking to bring Job to repentance and to

ritual purging, he himself is now in need of those because he has not humbled himself before God in the midst of his verbal onslaught.

So, I would argue Yahweh's rebuke does not deal so much with the content of Eliphaz's speeches per se, but rather with the characteristic arrogance with which Eliphaz has asserted himself. It is not to say that Yahweh agrees entirely with what Eliphaz has said to suggest this would be reading too much into the context. Rather, it seems that Yahweh is silent about the content of Eliphaz's speeches, but he is very much displeased with the strident posture Eliphaz adopts.

Eliphaz has arrogated to himself to speak unequivocally and unassailably as God's spokesman. And Yahweh now compels him to repent of this hubris. Glimpses of the genius of this book thus break forth.

The ancient Near Eastern rituals, which commended submission and purging, when a counselor would lead the sufferer to repentance have had the tables turned. The counselor himself must now seek humbling reconciliation with the offended deity under the auspices of the sufferer. This is the equivalent of an ancient plot twist.

So, this preceding analysis of these portions of Eliphaz's speeches has sought to underscore the reality that Eliphaz in his role as an ancient Near Eastern counselor has rooted his wisdom in the wisdom of ancient Mesopotamia. And in doing so, he has sought to bring Job to a place of divine appeasement but has failed. Gathering these insights provides a clearer understanding of Eliphaz's role and purpose.

He's the counselor who's supposed to bring Job to repentance but ultimately fails to do so. So, in conclusion, I have offered here a fresh and somewhat limited reassessment of the chief interlocutor of Job as found in his dialogue cycles in the book of Job. We looked at his likely background in the Mesopotamian worldview.

We talked about his reception history, and some of the interpretive ambiguity that is associated with him. We focused on a key passage that outlines his retributive doctrine, chapter four, verses seven through 11. We saw how he provides a paradigm for the other friends in outlining retribution as a key tenant in his theology.

We also looked at Eliphaz from the perspective of ancient Near Eastern wisdom. We saw him as an Edomite sage who was familiar with the role that a chief counselor would take. He's rooted in his theological and wisdom traditions, which were pervasive throughout the ancient world.

And we saw that these reflected around the ideas of retribution theology, divine incantation, and mantic wisdom. Finally, I offered an exegetical analysis of key parts of the Eliphaz's speeches. This analysis fortifies this link between the content of the

counsel provided by friends and the counsel of other sages from the ancient Near East who also were providing theodicy.

This link underscores that Eliphaz should not be treated as a flat one-dimensional character in the book, but should be viewed as a sophisticated counselor who has at his disposal, the best of human wisdom and insight. And yet, in spite of this, Eliphaz fails as a counselor because, in his hubris, he has not acknowledged the true source of wisdom, which lies not in shadowy dreams in the traditions of the ancients or in the customary cleansing rituals of the ancient Near East religions. Rather, it lies in Yahweh himself.

As the Yahweh speeches demonstrate, God alone is the source of transcendent wisdom, capable of resolving the ultimate questions prompted by human finitude. As Christians, we have to close the loop to acknowledge that centuries later, this divine wisdom of Yahweh would come to fruition in the Savior born to redeem lost humanity. A humanity whose best insights are but foolishness to God, as 1 Corinthians 1 tells us.

This Savior would be hailed as the one whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Where Eliphaz founders as a sage, Jesus Christ consummates the wisdom of Yahweh.

Jesus Christ is the perfect merging of divine and human wisdom, the antidote to Job's suffering, the answer to humanity's greatest need. Christ is indeed the wonderful counselor to whom we all must give heed. Thank you.

This is Dr. Kyle Dunham in his teaching on Eliphaz, the pious sage in Job. This is session number two, Eliphaz's wisdom theodicy in the context of the ancient Near East and Scripture.