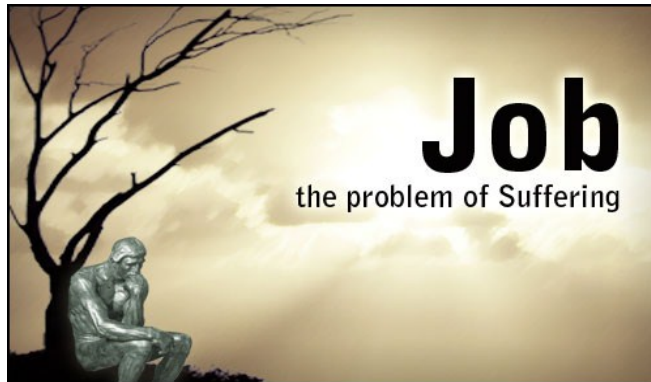


So after Eliphaz has explained his revelation, since Job could not have believed this revelation, he add, "Call now; is there anyone who will answer you?" as if to say: If you do not believe that this was revealed to me, you yourself can invoke God, if perhaps he himself will answer this doubt for you. If through your own merits you do not think you can obtain this from God, "Turn to one of the holy men," so that by his mediation you will be able to know the truth from God about this matter. Note that he says, "to one of the holy men," because one should not diligently investigate hidden things through unclean spirits in just any way or using any technique. One may only do this through God or the holy ones of God according to Isaiah, "And when they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the wizards who hiss in their incantations,' should not a people ask for insight from their God for the living or the dead." (8:19)

END OF CHAPTER 4

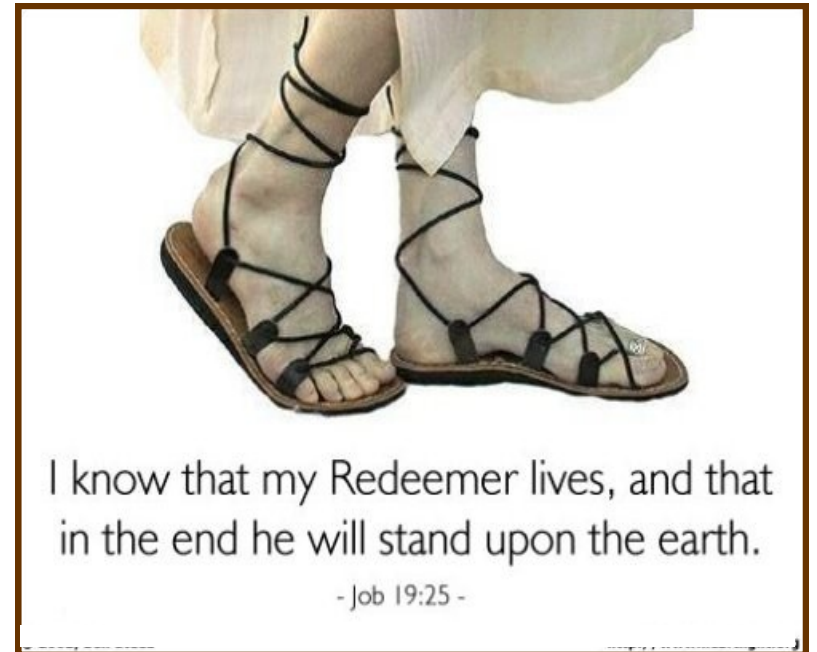


FOR MORE PAMPHLETS ON BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com

Job

Chapter Four:



The Discourse of Eliphaz

The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated by Brian Mulladay and edited by Rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P. The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DISCOURSE OF ELIPHAZ

First Lesson: On The Impatience of Job

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite spoke in response, 2 “If one ventures a word with you, perhaps you will be offended, but who can keep from speaking? 3 Behold, you have instructed many and you have strengthened those with weak hands; 4 Your words have upheld the tottering, and you have strengthened those with trembling knees. 5 But now a trial has come upon you, and you too have fallen away. It touched you, and you are dismayed. 6 Where is your courage, your patience, and the integrity of your ways?”

The friends of Job who came to console him, who had kept silence up to now because the acuteness of his pain, after Job had finished undertook the boldness to speak. First Eliphaz the Temanite speaks. He had not taken Job’s words in the spirit in which they were spoken. He imputed the hatred of his present life which Job said he suffered to despair; his great bitterness to impatience and his profession of his innocence to presumption.

First, he therefore accuses Job of impatience and begins to speak to him as one does to a man subject to the sin of impatience who immediately reacts angrily to the words spoken to him. So he says, “If one ventures a word with you, you will perhaps be offended.” Here he adequately assesses the usual temperament of an impatient and angry man, who cannot suffer to hear someone finish the argument, but is immediately provoked to answer him when he has only just begun to speak. He says, “perhaps” lest he be condemned for rash judgment, although one should also interpret words or deeds in presumptuous or suspicious things in the better light. But whereas he accuses Job of impatience, he shows himself the one given to impatience and silliness when he says, “but who can keep from speaking?” So Sirach says, “As arrows inflicted in the thigh of a dog, so is the word in the heart of a fool,” (19:12) although one may grant that even the just from divine zeal are sometimes unable to be silent in speaking what must be said for the honor of God. As Jeremiah says, “If I say I will not remember,” i.e. the words of the Lord, “or speak any more in his name, there is a kind of burning fire in my heart shut up in my bones, and I am weary for holding it in and cannot.” (20:9)

In whatever way a man falls into sin, he will obtain mercy if he recognizes his sin and repents. But because there is no one who can understand all his sins, according to the text, “Who can understand his sins,” (Ps. 18:12) it follows that most men do not apply the remedy to their sins which will free them because they do not know their sins. In the next verse he expresses this saying, “Since not one understands it,” to avoid the snare of sins, “they will perish forever,” for most men are never freed from sin. But because there are some who apply remedies against sins even though they do not understand them, like David who said, “From hidden faults cleanse me, O Lord,” (Ps. 18:12) he adds, “Those, however, who will remain” from the number of those who perish in eternity, “are born away from them,” for they will be separated from their company.

“They will die,” because though a man may repent from his sin, he is still not free from the necessity of dying, but wisdom will not die in them. He says this next, “But not in wisdom.” Or when he says, “They will die but not in wisdom,” he does not complete the thought which immediately preceded but what he said a little before that, “They will perish in eternity,” so that the sense is that they will die without wisdom. Or “Those who remain” may mean the children who remain after their parents die, yet because of the sins of their parents, which they imitate, are born away to death without wisdom.

Eliphaz wants to establish from all these arguments that since the condition of man is so frail, as long as a man does not know he or his sons are going to perdition, he easily falls into sin. So although Job did not recognize that he was a sinner, one must believe that he and his sons suffered because of some sins.

He uses the condition of man as a premise and so he concludes to his miserable destiny saying, “who are eaten as by a moth.” This can be understood in a *prima facie* literal sense to refer to the corporeal death which man suffers of necessity from the fact that he has an earthly foundation. In this way, it can mean two sorts of death. First, natural death by the expression, “who are eaten as by a moth.” For just as a moth corrupts the clothing from which it is born, so the natural death of the body arises from the interior causes. This can also refer to violent death for he says next, “Between morning and evening they will be destroyed,” for trees are cut down by a cause outside the tree itself. He says distinctly enough, “between morning and evening,” because natural death can certainly be foreseen before it happens by certain natural symptoms, but violent death is completely uncertain as though it were subject to different causes. For this reason, a man cannot know if he will live from morning until evening. Yet note that this is not the meaning of the literal sense, because above he addressed defect of sin, when he said, “and his angels he charges with error.” So as the conclusion must follow from the premises, this passage must also refer to sin. Sin consumes the life of justice in man in two ways. In one way, from interior corruption, which he refers to in saying, “who are eaten by a moth.” Just as clothing is eaten by the moth which is born from it, so the justice of a man is destroyed by those things which arise in man, like the corruption of evil desires (*fomes*), bad thoughts and others things like this. In another way it is corrupted by exterior temptation, which is indicated when he says, “Between morning and evening, they will be cut down.” Consider here that interior temptation does not suddenly overthrow someone, but gradually overcomes him when through negligence he does not take care to restrain the first movements of sin in him. As Qoheleth says, “He who neglects little things, gradually falls.” (19:1) In the same way, clothing which is not shaken out, is eaten by a moth. However, exterior temptation generally overcomes a man suddenly, like David who rushed into adultery at the sight of a woman and also many who denied the faith under torture.

He next proceeds to clearly demonstrate Job’s impatience, by exaggerating this impatience from two points of view: his former teaching and his former life. From his former teaching, indeed, because it is shameful for a man to not practice what he teaches to others. As St. Matthew says, “For they say and do not do.” (23:3) Before Job had held many back from impatience, and used to adapt his teaching to different men in different ways. For there are some who are impatient from ignorance, as long as they do not know how to use adversities for virtue. As to these he says, “Behold, You have instructed many.” Others, however, practice virtue in adversity at first, but when the adversity lasts a long time they are discouraged as though tired of right action. As to these he says, “and you have strengthened those with weak hands,” by persuading them to good works. There are also some who in adversity fall into a condition of doubt as to whether this happened from divine judgment. As to these he says, “Your words have upheld the tottering.” There also are some who sustain a small adversity but under great adversity fall as crushed by a heavy burden. For these he says, “and you have strengthened those with trembling knees,” namely, with your counsels, for the knees of a man tremble when he carries a great weight. The Lord exhorts us to perfect ourselves in this condition saying in Isaiah, “Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the trembling knees.” (35:3)

Eliphaz wants to show as a consequence that Job did not practice the things he taught others and so he continues, “But now a trial has come to you, and you too have fallen away,” namely, from the firmness of mind which you seemed to have and which you recommended to others. This refers to the adversity he had suffered in exterior things. “It touched you, and you are dismayed,” i.e. you have lost the peace of mind which you seemed to have. This refers to the affliction of body he was suffering. So Satan said above, “Put forth your hand and touch his bones and his flesh.” He therefore had accused Job of not living his previous teaching by practicing subsequent patience. This is against Proverbs, “A man learns good sense by patience.” (19:11)

He also exaggerated the subsequent impatience which appeared in Job from his past life. For virtue which fails so quickly in trial does not seem true because, as it is written in Sirach, "Gold and silver are proved in fire; men are proven in the crucible of humility." (2:5) A man is preserved by many virtues so that he does not fail in trials. First, some are preserved through fear of God, when they consider that the evil things they suffer come forth from divine providence. As Job said above, "As the Lord pleases, so has he done." [1:2] Eliphaz said to exclude this virtue, "Where is your fear?" with which you seemed to revere God. Second, some are preserved through constancy of soul, which has two degrees. In some men, their strength of soul is so exceedingly great that they are not excessively bothered in adversities. This is due to courage. So he says, "Where is your courage?" This should not be taken here to refer to the fortitude which men guard so that they do not succumb to fear, but that they are not discouraged in sorrow. Some suffer a very burdensome amount of sorrow from adversity, but they are not led astray by it because of the good disposition of their reason. This is due to patience. The difference between patience and courage is the same difference which the philosophers put between continence and chastity. So he continues, "Your patience?" Third, some are safeguarded by love of the right action and from the horror of doing something base, so that even if they should be interiorly disturbed by adversity, they still break out in nothing unworthy, either in word or deed. So he adds, "Where is the integrity of your ways?" "Ways" here means actions by which one arrives at an end as if by certain kinds of roads. "Ways" can also mean carefully thought out counsel, by which someone comes to trust that he can evade adversities and so he tolerates adversities more easily.

The Second Lesson: Job and His Family Justly Punished

7 Remember, I implore you; who that was innocent has ever perished? Or when have the upright been destroyed? 8 No, rather I have seen that those who do evil and sow pains, reap the same. 9 By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his anger they are consumed. 10 The roar of the lion, the voice of the lioness and the teeth of the whelp have been broken. 11 The tigress perished with him for lack of prey, and the whelps of the lioness have been scattered.

Eliphaz takes the third argument (to show that adversity comes from sin) from the human condition which he joins to the conclusion of the preceding argument. Thus one argument could be formed from two and he means this when he says, "How much more those who dwell in houses of clay." The human condition is such that the body is formed from earthly matter. He indicates this saying, "How much more those who dwell in houses of clay?" The human body is said to be clay because it is formed more fully from earth and water, the heavier elements as its motion makes evident. So Genesis says, "God formed man from the slime of the earth." (2:7) This body of clay is called the house of the soul because the human soul is situated in the body as a man in a house or a sailor in a ship, as the mover of the body. There were some who said because of this that the soul was only accidentally united to the body as a man is to clothes or a sailor in a ship. But he disproves this opinion when he adds, "whose foundation is dust." By this we are given to understand that the human soul is united to the body as form to matter. For matter is said to be the foundation of form, because it is the first part in the generation of a thing like the foundation is the first part in the building of a house. Now, he uses this manner of speaking to attribute what is the soul to man because the soul is man, as some held who said that man is nothing but a soul clothed with a body, but because the soul is the more principal part of man. Each thing is usually called from what is more principal in it. These two things which he says about the weakness of man seem to be placed in opposition to what he has already said about the excellence of the angels. For the phrase, "those who dwell in houses of clay," seems to be placed in opposition to what he said in "Those who serve him," (v. 18) cling to him and live spiritually in him. However, when he says, "whose foundation is dust," this seems to oppose, "in his angels," (v. 18) for angels are incorporeal in nature according to Psalm 103, "Who makes his angels spirit." (v.4)

So if God should inflict punishment on someone who was innocent to whom punishment is not due, but the man who suffers because of God did not inflict punishment on another man without fault— which would follow necessarily if the one punished by God were innocent—it follows that a man punished by God is more just than God. To justify man compared to God is tantamount to justifying him with respect to God under the aspect of justice. As perhaps this might not seem an unfitting conclusion to someone, he carries the argument to another more apparently unfitting conclusion saying, “Can a man be pure before his maker?” Each thing has purity in that it conserves its own nature which it receives from its own causes. So the purity of each effect depends on its cause, and it cannot surpass its cause in purity. Thus a man cannot be more pure than his Creator, who is God.

His second argument comes from a comparison to the angels. It is from the greater when he says, “Even those who serve him are not stable and in his angels he finds evil.” This opinion is clear according to the Catholic faith. The Catholic faith holds as certain that all angels were created good. Some of them fell through their own fault from the state of righteousness; some however attained a greater glory. The fact that the angels fell from the state of righteousness seems astonishing for two reasons. One pertains to their contemplative power, the other to their active power. From the contemplative power it seems that there should have been steadfastness in the angels. It is clear that the cause of mutability is potency; the cause of immutability is act. For it is from the nature of potency that something can be or not be. But as what is more completed by act has a firmer hold on unity, what is act in itself is completely unchangeable. Note that as matter is related to form, as potency is to act so the will is to the good. What is good in itself, namely God, is completely unchangeable. However the wills of other natures which are not good in themselves are compared to him as potency to act. Thus the more they cleave to him, the more confirmed they are in good. So since the angels seem to cling more to God and in closer proximity than other creatures, in that they contemplate him more exactly, they seem to be the more steadfast than other creatures. Yet they were not steadfast. Thus much less can lower creatures like men, inasmuch as they cling to God by reverencing him in serving him, be judged also to be steadfast. However, from the active power it seems that in the angels there can be little or no depravity. As the rule more approaches the true measure of straight, so much the less crookedness does it have. God, in whom the prime righteousness exists, directing all things by his providence, disposes lower creatures through higher ones. Hence, as they are sent by God to direct others, there seems to be little or no perversity possible in the higher creatures who are called angels. So if there can be perversity in them, one must believe that depravity could be found in any man, however great he may appear to be. However, one should take care that from this opinion, he does not fall into the error of Origen who asserts that even now all created spirits are not steadfast and can be seduced into depravity. For some gained by grace the favor to cling to God unchangeably by seeing him in his essence. In this way, even some men, although they are lower in nature than the angels are granted by grace immunity from the depravity of mortal sin even in this life.

After Eliphaz accused Job of impatience taking his opportunity from what Job had said, “Before I eat, I sigh,” (3:24), he intends now to accuse him of presumption from the fact that he said he was innocent. To show him that he is not innocent, he takes his argument from the premise of his adversity saying, “Remember, I implore you, who that was innocent has ever perished; or when have the upright been destroyed?” Consider here again that Eliphaz and the other two friends were of the opinion that the misfortunes of this world do not happen to someone except as a punishment for sin and on the other hand prosperity comes as a reward for justice. So according to his opinion, it would not seem fitting that anyone innocent should perish temporally or that anyone who was upright, i.e. just according to virtue, should be destroyed by the loss of temporal glory, which he thought was a reward for justice. He believed this opinion to be so true that even Job could not disagree with it. Yet he thought that Job had, as it were, forgotten the truth which he knew at one time, because his spirit was troubled. So he says, “Remember.”

Given therefore that adversity does not happen to the innocent and the upright, he consequently identifies those who experience adversity, “No, rather, I have seen that those who do evil and sow pains, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his anger they are consumed.” When he says, “I have seen,” he makes allusion to the fact that he himself has proven these things by experience. For those “who do evil,” he understands those who openly do injustice especially by harming others. For those who “sow pains and reap the same,” he understands those who harm others by deceit. These sow pains when they prepare calumnies by which they make others suffer. Those men reap pain when they continue their evildoing until it takes effect, and they take this to be excellent fruit. He carries this metaphor further in speaking about punishment. Corn fields usually dry up and are destroyed by a scorching wind. As Malachi says, “I will rebuke the devourer,” i.e. the wind,” so that it may not devour the fruit of your land.” (3:11) He refers to this when he says, “they will perish by the blast of God,” as though divine judgment itself coming forth to punish evil is similar to the blast of the wind. The very revenge of God is called the breath, i.e. the wind, of his anger. He says not only that they perish, but that they are consumed, because they are not only punished in their own persons, but their children and their whole family perishes so that nothing seems to remain of them. This seemed to express Job both because he had been afflicted in his body and had lost his children, his family and his wealth.

But the fact that the children and family should suffer for the sins of the parents seemed to go contrary to the opinion of Eliphaz since he intends to defend the opinion that adversities in this world are punishments for sin. Eliphaz answers this objection saying, "The roar of the lion, the voice of the lioness, and the teeth of the whelp have been broken." Here first occurs the consideration that man is more noble than other animals because of reason. When then he sets reason aside, he follows the passions of beasts, and so he bears the likeness of beasts and the name of beast befits him because he imitates their passions. For example, one who gives in to the passion of concupiscence is likened to a horse or a mule in the Psalms, "Be not like horse and mule, unintelligent." (31:9) The one who gives into anger or ferociousness is called a lion or a bear in Proverbs, "A roaring lion or a hungry bear is the impious prince over a poor people" (28:15) and Ezekiel, "He became a lion and he learned to catch prey and devour men." (19:3) So now he compares a furious man to a lion saying, "The roar of the lion," for roaring is an indication of the ferociousness of the lion. Often the prodding of a wife adds to the ferociousness of her husband, and so the ferocious thing the husband does is imputed to the fault of his wife. This is clear with Herod's wife who prodded him to behead John the Baptist. (cf. Matt. 14:8) So he says, "The voice of the lioness." Sometimes what a tyrant acquired by cruelty, his sons use wantonly and so they rejoice in the father's plunder. Therefore they are not immune from fault. So the text continues, "the teeth of the whelps are broken." Nahum says, "The lion took enough for his whelps." (2:12) Thus he seems to have responded to the premised objection, because it is not just for the wife and the children to be punished for the sins of the husband, when they were participants with him in the fault. He said all this in trying to render Job and his family infamous for robbery.

Yet it seemed that what he said did not pertain to Job, because his wife did not seem to be punished. To remove this difficulty, he says, "The tigress perished with him for lack of prey." For those who steal as a practice, think themselves punished if they are not permitted to steal. Consider that women are compared to a lioness because of the ferociousness of their anger and to a tigress because of the readiness and quickness of their anger. As Sirach says, "There is no anger like the anger of a woman" (25:23) and "All malice is brief compared to the malice of a woman." (25:26) Because all of Job's children had completely perished, he adds, "and the whelps of the lioness have been scattered."

Then he tells of the manner of the declaration made to him saying, "I heard a voice like a gentle breeze." Note here that apparitions of this kind are sometimes made from a good spirit, sometimes from an evil spirit. In both kinds, man suffers fear in the beginning because of the unusual character of the vision. But when the apparition proceeds from a good spirit, the fear ends in consolation, as is clear in the angel who comforts Daniel (10:18) and when Gabriel comforts Zechariah and Mary in Luke I. An evil spirit however leaves a man disturbed. The fact that he says, "I heard a voice like a gentle breeze," demonstrates a consolation which put his former fear to rest. By this statement the vision is proven to be from a good spirit and not from a wicked spirit by whose lying visions are often shown. The end of Kings III expresses the same thing, "I will forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." (22:22) The third book of Kings also speaks in this way of the apparition made to Elijah, "After the earthquake came a still small voice, and the Lord was in the voice." (19:12) However we should note that sometimes one hears great disturbances and horrible voices even in visions which come from a good spirit as is clear in Ezekiel when it is said, "I looked and behold a stormy wind came out of the north," (1:4) and after many verses is added, "I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters." (1:4) Revelation says, "And I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet." (1:10) This describes the threats or other grave dangers which are contained in these kinds of revelation. But the message here should have been one of consolation, and so he introduces the voice of the speaker as similar to a gentle breeze.

Finally, he expresses the words which he asserts were revealed to him when he says, "'Can mortal man be righteous before God?'" He introduces these words to confirm his opinion which he already touched on (v. 7), namely, that adversities do not happen to someone in this life except because of sin. He introduces three reasons to prove that no one can excuse himself when he suffers adverse things asserting that he is free from sin. The first of these is taken from a comparison of man to God and leads to an impossible conclusion. For if man is punished by God without being at fault, it follows that man would be more just than God. The work of justice is to give each one his due.

He places the person revealing third, when the text says, "It stood still, but I could not discern the face, an image before my eyes." Here he indicates three things which show for certain that it was a vision. Note that sometimes because of an excessive disturbance of smoke or the mists, either dreams do not appear at all, because there are no phantasms or dreams appear in a confused and disturbed way, as is often the case with those who have a fever. Since dreams of this kind have little or no spiritual content, they are completely without meaning. When, however, the mists and smoke have settled, quiet and ordered dreams appear, and as these are more spiritual, they emerge from the intellectual part of the soul with some strength. Dreams of this sort are usually more true. Therefore he says, "It stood still," which shows the stability of the vision. Further note that even when dreams are quiet and they are generally full of thoughts which remain from things experienced previously, one as a result frequently sees in a dream those with whom he has ordinary contact. Because such dreams have their cause in our character and not in a higher nature, they have no great meaning.

He shows this is not the case when he says, "but I could not discern the face." In this he shows that this kind of vision did not take its origin from something he had already experienced, but from a more hidden cause. Third, consider that visions of this kind which arise from a higher cause, sometimes appear to someone asleep and at other times to those who are awake. Those seem to be truer and more certain when they appear to those who are awake than when they appear to those who are asleep, because reason is more free in someone who is awake, and because in sleep one does not easily discern the difference between spiritual revelations and frivolous or ordinary dreams. To show that this revelation was not made to someone asleep but who was awake, he says, "An image was before me eyes." He means here that he saw this with the open eyes of someone awake. He also meant to express this before when he said, "When sleep falls on men," (v. 13) where he clarifies that he had been seized by sleep.

The Third Lesson: the Nocturnal Vision of Eliphaz

12 Now a word was spoken to me in a hidden way; stealthily my ear perceived the dry bed of his whisper. 13 In the dread of the vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men 14 Fear seized me, and trembling which made my bones shake with fear. 15 A spirit glided past me, and the hairs stood up on my flesh. 16 It stood still, but I could not discern the face, an image before my eyes. And I heard a voice gentle to my ears. 17 "Can mortal man be righteous in comparison with God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker? 18 Even those who serve him are not stable and in his angels he found evil; 19 How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is dust. Who are eaten as by a moth. 20 Between morning and evening they will be destroyed and since not one understands, they perish forever. 21 But those who will remain are born away from them. They will die, but not in wisdom." ch.5 I Call now, is there anyone to answer you? Turn to one of the holy men.

Because Eliphaz had accepted that adversities in this life only happened to someone because of his sin, he wanted from this to accuse Job and his family of being subject to sin. As exactly the contrary was clearly the case for Job and his family, he wanted to show that neither Job nor his family was immune from sin. Since his opinion seemed to be weak because of the authority of Job and his reputation, he referred to a higher authority showing he is about to propose he has learned from revelation. He first proposes the obscurity of the revelation to demonstrate its high source. The higher things are above man, the less perceptible they are by man. As St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "He was taken up into the paradise of God and heard things which cannot be told to man." (12:4) In this way, Eliphaz speaks either truly or falsely saying, "Now a word was spoken to me in a hidden way."

Consider that some truth, although hidden from men because of its exalted character, is still revealed to some clearly and revealed to others in a hidden way. To avoid the charge of boasting, he says that this truth was revealed to him in a hidden way, “stealthily my ear perceived the dry bed of his whisper.” Here he hints that there are three ways in which things are hidden in revelations. The first of these is when the intelligible truth is revealed to someone through an imaginary vision. As Numbers says, “If there will be a prophet of the Lord among you, I will speak to him in a vision or a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; With him I speak mouth to mouth, and he does not see God clearly and not through riddles.” (12:6-8) Moses, then, heard this hidden word by a clear voice. Others however hear in the manner of a whisper. The second hidden manner is in the imaginary vision when words are spoken which sometimes expressly contain the truth, as in the text Isaiah, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive,” (7:14) or sometimes under certain figures of speech, as in Isaiah, “A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse and a flower, etc.” (9:1) When therefore Isaiah heard, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive,” he perceived the whispering itself, but when he heard, “A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,” he perceived the strains of the whisper. For figures of speech are like strains derived from the truth itself through the likeness of a simile. The third hidden way is when someone sometimes has a frequent and long-lasting revelation of God, as Exodus says about Moses, “The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.” (33:11) Sometimes someone has a sudden and passing revelation. Eliphaz shows the sudden character of his revelation when he says, “stealthily”, for we hear those things almost stealthily which come to us quickly and in, as it were, a fleeting moment.

After he shows the high source of the vision in this way, he proceeds to the circumstances of the revelation. First, he speaks of the time saying, “In the dread vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men,” because the quiet night is more suitable for receiving revelations. During the day, the mind suffers noise from the disturbances of men and the occupations of the senses, so that it cannot perceive the whispering of a hidden word.

Second, he speaks of the disposition of the recipient, and so he adds, “Fear seized me.” For men usually are struck with fear at the unusual, and so when someone has strange revelations, he suffers fear in the beginning. To show the greatness of this fear he adds, “and trembling,” for the trembling of the body is an indication of the greatness of fear.

To emphasize this sort of trembling, he continues, “which made all my bones shake” as if to say: This trembling shows that the tremble was not superficial, but violent, the kind which struck even the bones. A resemblance is described in Daniel, “So I saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me; my countenance was changed in me, and I grew faint and I had no strength left.” (10:8) As a consequence, he shows the cause of this fear when he says, “When a spirit glided past my face; the hairs on my flesh stood up.” For it is reasonable that one with lesser power is awestruck in the presence of one with greater power.

It is obvious that the power of the spirit is greater than the power of the flesh and so it is not surprising that the hair of the flesh stand up in the presence of the spirit as happens when one is overcome by sudden fear. This is especially true when the presence of the spirit is felt in some strange corporeal phenomenon, for strange things usually lead to wonder and fear. So that the time expressed might be fitted for that dread which he recalls he suffered, for he said above, “In the dread vision of the night.” Since one cannot discern things by sight in the darkness, any small commotion usually induces disturbance in one who thinks that it is something greater. This is what Wisdom says, “The sighing of the wind, the tuneful song of the birds in the spreading branches, all held them paralyzed with fear.” (17:17)