

The Friends of Job Express Their Regrets



Job and His Three Friends, Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1904

"We hope, old friend, this late unpleasantness
Will not embitter you against us three.
All that we said-though, yes, it brought distress-
We said to you in all sincerity.

True, no man likes a bitter medicine,
And we served ours with precious little honey;
Perhaps it was not (as we judged) your sin
That cost you all your flocks and herds and money.

With greater care we should have framed our speech,

Given your losses. We must wish unsaid
Much that we chose too frankly then to preach,
What with your several children lately dead.

Oh, will you need help with their burial?
It would be our pleasure with you to keep
Vigil, and say a *kaddish* for each soul.
Pity that hired mourners are not cheap.

Please know we are your servants. Anything
In which we may assist you in your sorrow
Is our sworn duty, and we swear to bring
Those seven bullocks to your fields tomorrow.

Speaking of which, (and pray forgive us) we
Were hard pressed to find seven of our own
To offer you; and of this number three
Are somewhat scabbed, and good Zophar's is known

To have run mad some time ago. But you,
For your munificence known near and far,
Will overlook these faults of ours, in view
Of our devotion, true friends that we are.

We will not trouble you with further talk,
But we rejoice that you are thus restored;
Wealth must be his who makes the Lord his rock,
And righteousness has always its reward."