

Job 10:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,

Analysis

Job contemplates mortality's brevity: 'Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little.' The question 'Are not my days few?' (lo meat yamay, הַלֹּא מֵעַת יָמִים) acknowledges life's brevity. Job pleads 'cease' (chadal, תַּחֲלָל, stop or desist) and 'let me alone' (shith mimmenni, שֵׁת מִמְּנִי, leave from me) so he can 'take comfort' (abligha, אֲבִלִּיחָה, brighten or be glad) 'a little' (meat, מֵעַת, small amount).

Job's request is modest—not perpetual happiness but brief respite before death. The plea reveals suffering's toll: Job cannot envision long-term relief, only momentary comfort. Life's brevity usually motivates urgency (Psalm 90:12), but for Job it supports petition for mercy—if days are few, why not grant brief relief? The argument has logical force: punish later or skip it entirely since death comes soon anyway.

James 4:14 echoes Job's brevity theme: 'What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth.' But the application differs: James warns against presumption, while Job appeals for mercy. Life's brevity cuts both ways—it should humble the proud and comfort the afflicted. Job needs the latter application.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom frequently meditated on life's transience (Psalm 39:4-5, 90:3-6, 103:15-16, Ecclesiastes 6:12). Job appeals to this common wisdom, hoping God will grant mercy given humanity's brief existence. The plea assumes divine compassion should account for human frailty.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does life's brevity both warn against wasting time and comfort us that suffering is temporary?
2. What does Job's modest request (comfort 'a little') teach about suffering's effect on our expectations?
3. In what ways does eternal life in Christ transform our perspective on earthly life's brevity?

Interlinear Text

מְעֻטָּה בְּאֶלְּיָה יְמִינֵךְ לְיִתְּחִילֵךְ יְשִׁיחֵךְ תְּבִרְכֵךְ

H3808

a little

Are not my days

cease

then and let me alone

H4480

H4592

H3117

H2308

H7896

מְעֻטָּה בְּאֶלְּיָה יְגַהֵּן

that I may take comfort a little

H1082

H4592

Additional Cross-References

Job 14:1 (Parallel theme): Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

Psalms 39:13 (Parallel theme): O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

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