

Job 17:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye
continue in their provocation?

Analysis

Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation? Job's rhetorical questions express his anguish over the relentless taunting he endures from his so-called friends. The Hebrew hatulim (חֲטָלִים, "mockers") denotes scoffers who ridicule and belittle—not merely those who disagree but those who deride with contempt. Job's companions, who should have comforted him, instead accused him of secret sin and hypocrisy, making his suffering unbearable.

The phrase "mine eye continue in their provocation" (uvehamerotam talin eini, וּבְהַמְּרוֹתָם תַּלֵּן עִינִּי) is vivid: Job's eyes—representing his consciousness and perception—must dwell constantly upon their bitter provocations. The verb talin (תַּלֵּן) means "to lodge" or "remain overnight," suggesting unceasing exposure to antagonism. The noun merotam (הַמְּרוֹתָם) comes from marah (מֵרָה), meaning rebellion or bitter provocation—the same word used for Israel's rebellion against God.

Job's lament reveals profound psychological torment: physical suffering compounded by social isolation and theological assault. His friends' accusations that suffering always results from personal sin represented a simplistic theology that failed to account for God's mysterious purposes. Job's experience prefigures Christ, the righteous Sufferer who endured mockery from religious accusers while innocent (Matthew 27:41-44). This verse validates that suffering believers may honestly express their anguish to God.

Historical Context

The book of Job is set in the patriarchal period (pre-Mosaic era), likely around 2000-1800 BCE, though its composition date is debated. Job lived in Uz, possibly in northern Arabia or Edom. The cultural context emphasizes honor-shame dynamics: Job's loss of wealth, family, and health resulted in social disgrace and isolation.

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature addressed theodicy—explaining suffering and divine justice. Job's friends represented conventional retribution theology: prosperity rewards righteousness; suffering punishes sin. This theology dominated ancient thought, making Job's undeserved suffering intellectually and socially scandalous. His friends' mockery wasn't mere cruelty but reflected their theological conviction that Job must be guilty.

The Hebrew concept of corporate solidarity meant suffering brought communal shame. Job's friends initially sat in silent sympathy (2:13), but their speeches became increasingly accusatory. Archaeological discoveries of Mesopotamian wisdom texts like "Ludlul Bel Nemeqi" ("I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom") show parallel concerns about innocent suffering, but Job uniquely maintains faith while demanding answers from God. This historical-theological tension prepares readers for the gospel's revelation: the perfectly righteous One suffers for the guilty.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do Job's honest laments to God model faithful suffering without either denial or despair?
2. When have you experienced spiritual 'friends' whose advice compounded rather than comforted your pain?

3. What does this passage teach about the inadequacy of simplistic answers to complex suffering?
4. How does Job's experience of mockery while innocent point forward to Christ's suffering?
5. In what ways might we inadvertently become 'mockers' to fellow believers who are suffering?

Interlinear Text

תֵּל | ۱ בְּהַמְרוֹת מֵעַמְּדֵי | תְּלִים | בְּתִלְמִים | אָמַן | לְאָמַן |

H518 H3808 Are there not mockers H2049 H5978 in their provocation H4784 continue H3885

עִתִּים:

with me and doth not mine eye

H5869

Additional Cross-References

Job 16:20 (Parallel theme): My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.

Job 12:4 (Parallel theme): I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn.