

Job 21:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

Analysis

Job concludes his response: 'How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?' The verb *nacham* (נָחַם, comfort) means to console or encourage. *Hevel* (הֶבֶל, vain) means emptiness, breath, or futility—the same word translated 'vanity' in Ecclesiastes. *Ma'al* (מָאַל, falsehood) denotes treachery, unfaithfulness, or deceit. Job indicts his friends' counsel as worthless because founded on false premises—they assumed his suffering proved sin. Their theological error made their comfort not merely ineffective but harmful.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern friendship included obligation to support friends in distress. Job's friends fulfilled formal requirements (sitting with him seven days, offering counsel) but failed substantively because their theology was flawed. The verse teaches that good intentions don't compensate for false doctrine—pastoral care requires both compassion and truth. Job's accusation anticipates God's verdict (42:7) that the friends spoke wrongly.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Job's critique teach us about the necessity of sound doctrine in pastoral care?
2. What is the difference between comfort based on truth and well-intentioned counsel based on falsehood?

Interlinear Text

אֵיךְ	תִּנְחֶמ וְנִי	הָ בָל	וּ תְשׁוּבֵיתֶיךָ מִ	נִשְׁאַר
H349	How then comfort	ye me in vain	seeing in your answers	there remaineth
	H5162	H1892	H8666	H7604
חֲמַל:				
falsehood				
H4604				

Additional Cross-References

Job 16:2 (Parallel theme): I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all.

Job 32:3 (Parallel theme): Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.