

Job 21:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes.

Analysis

Their seed is established in their sight with them (זָרָאָם נֶאֱחָז לְפָנֵיהֶם, zar'am nakhon lifneiham)—Job begins cataloging the prosperity of the wicked. Zera (זֶרַע) means seed or offspring, representing posterity and legacy. Nakhon (נֶאֱחָז) means established, firm, or secure. The phrase "in their sight" emphasizes that the wicked see their descendants prosper before dying, considered ultimate blessing in ancient culture.

Their offspring before their eyes (לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְצֶאֱצָאֵיהֶם, vetse'etsa'eihem le'eineiham)—This poetic parallelism reinforces the point: wicked people enjoy seeing grandchildren and even great-grandchildren, living to old age with family intact. This directly contradicts the friends' theology. They claimed the wicked lose children as divine punishment (4:10-11, 8:4, 15:34, 18:19). Job responds: look around, the facts prove otherwise. This empirical observation challenges theology divorced from reality.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelite and Near Eastern cultures measured divine blessing through descendants (Genesis 12:2, Deuteronomy 28:4). Dying with numerous offspring represented the highest blessing (Genesis 15:15, 25:8, Job 42:16). Job's friends had insisted the wicked don't enjoy this blessing. Job's counterargument—that observation proves otherwise—introduces an empirical method to theology that anticipates Ecclesiastes' similar wrestling with divine providence.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when people who reject God seem to prosper in family, health, and wealth?
2. What does Job's empirical observation teach about the danger of maintaining theological positions that contradict observable reality?
3. How does this verse challenge simplistic 'prosperity gospel' thinking that equates godliness with material blessing?

Interlinear Text

זֶרְעָם	נָכַן	לְפָנֵיהֶם	עִמָּם	! צֶאֱצָאֵיהֶם
Their seed	is established	in their sight	H5973	with them and their offspring
H2233	H3559	H6440		H6631

לְעֵינֵיהֶם:
before their eyes
H5869