

Job 21:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.

Analysis

Their houses are safe from fear (בָּתִים שָׁלוֹם מִפְּחָד, bateihem shalom mipachad)—The word shalom (שָׁלוֹם) means peace, safety, or wholeness. Pachad (פְּחָד) denotes terror or dread. Job observes that the wicked live in security, free from the anxiety that haunts the righteous sufferer. This directly contradicts his friends' claims that the wicked live in constant dread (15:20-24, 18:11).

Neither is the rod of God upon them (וְלֹא שֶׁבֶט אֱלֹהֶם עַלְיָהֶם, velo shevet Eloah aleihem)—The shevet (שֶׁבֶט) or rod represents divine discipline and judgment. Job asserts that God's punishing hand doesn't touch the wicked as his friends claimed. This echoes Psalm 73:5, 'They are not in trouble as other men.' Job's argument anticipates Asaph's similar struggle with wicked prosperity until entering God's sanctuary revealed their ultimate destiny (Psalm 73:17-20).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern retribution theology insisted divine punishment was swift and certain. The Code of Hammurabi and Egyptian wisdom literature assumed moral causation—evil deeds produced immediate consequences. Job's observation that the wicked often escape divine discipline in this life challenged the dominant theological paradigm. Later biblical writers wrestled with the same tension (Psalms 37, 73; Ecclesiastes; Habakkuk 1:2-4).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do you maintain faith in divine justice when observing wicked people living in peace and prosperity?
2. What does Job's wrestling with delayed judgment teach about the difference between temporal and eternal perspectives?
3. How might God's 'rod' (discipline) actually be a sign of His love for His children (Hebrews 12:5-11)?

Interlinear Text

עָלֵיכֶם אֲלֹוֹת וְפִתְּחָה מִשְׁבֵּט שֶׁל זָמָן מִפְּנֵי חִידָּה וְלֹא מִפְּנֵי כְּבָדָה
Their houses are safe from fear neither is the rod of God
H1004 H7965 H6343 H3808 H7626 H433 H5921

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 73:5 (Parallel theme): They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.

Job 9:34 (Parallel theme): Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me: