

Job 23:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:

Analysis

On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him (לְיָמִין עָמַל, bis'mol ba'asoto v'lo-achaz)—The left hand (לְיָמִין, s'mol) represents the north in Hebrew spatial orientation. Job searches for God in every direction but cannot chazah (behold, perceive) divine presence. The verb asah (work, do) indicates God actively operates in human history, yet remains imperceptible to Job's senses.

He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him (אָרָא, ya'tof yamin v'lo er'eh)—Ataf means to envelop, cover, or wrap oneself, suggesting deliberate concealment. The right hand (יָמִין, yamin) signifies south. Job's directional search (north/left, south/right, combined with vv. 8's east and west) represents comprehensive seeking—yet God remains hidden. This paradox of divine hiddenness amid divine activity became central to theology: Deus absconditus (the hidden God) who works invisibly yet powerfully. Isaiah echoes: 'Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself' (Isaiah 45:15).

Historical Context

Written during Job's darkest hour, this verse captures the painful experience of divine absence despite continued faith. Ancient Near Eastern religions emphasized visible manifestations of deity through idols, natural phenomena, or temple presence. Job's theology of an invisible yet active God anticipates biblical

monotheism that forbids graven images (Exodus 20:4) and emphasizes God's spiritual nature (John 4:24).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do you maintain faith when God seems hidden despite evidence of His work in the world?
2. What does Job's directional search teach about the futility of seeking God through physical perception alone?
3. How does Christ as the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) answer Job's longing to behold God?

Interlinear Text

שְׁמִי אֵל	בְּעֵשֶׂת וְ	וְלֹא	אֶחֱזֶה	יְעִטֵּהוּ
On the left hand	where he doth work	H3808	but I cannot behold	him he hideth
H8040	H6213		H2372	H5848
הֵמָּה יְמִינִי	וְלֹא	אֶרְאֶה:		
himself on the right hand	H3808	that I cannot see		
H3225		H7200		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 8:17 (Parallel theme): And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Psalms 89:46 (Parallel theme): How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

