

Job 24:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst.

Analysis

Which make oil within their walls (בֵּין שׁוּרֹתָם יִצְהִירוּ, bein shurótam yatshíru)—The phrase bein shurotam literally means 'between their rows' or 'within their walls,' suggesting the enclosed spaces where olives are pressed. The verb tsahar (צָהַר) means to press out oil, labor-intensive work requiring crushing olives. The workers labor in the very midst of abundance—surrounded by olive oil, a staple of ancient diet and a symbol of prosperity (Psalm 104:15).

And tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst (יִקְבִּים וְצָמְאוּ, yeqavím darkhú vayyitsma'ú)—Yeqavím (יִקְבִּים) are winepresses, vats where grapes were crushed by foot. The verb darak (דָּרַךְ) means to tread or march—the workers stamp grapes in the press. Yet they 'suffer thirst' (tsama, צָמָא)—they're surrounded by grape juice but cannot drink. This cruel irony completes Job's catalogue: workers produce abundance yet experience deprivation. They create oil but remain hungry, tread wine but suffer thirst, harvest grain but go naked. Isaiah 5:8-13 pronounces woe on those who 'join house to house' and 'lay field to field' until the poor have no place, warning that such oppression leads to judgment.

Historical Context

Olive oil and wine production were major industries in ancient Israel, labor-intensive processes requiring many workers. Oil presses and winepresses were often located on large estates owned by wealthy landowners. That workers pressed oil and trod grapes while suffering thirst suggests exploitation—they weren't

allowed to consume any of what they produced, denied even the minimal benefit Deuteronomy 25:4 granted oxen ('Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn'). If even animals had right to eat while working, human workers certainly should.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this image of laboring amid abundance while suffering deprivation speak to modern economic inequality?
2. What does it mean that Job uses this example to question God's justice—if even oxen have rights while working, why not humans?
3. How can believers ensure that workers benefit from the wealth they create rather than serving solely owners' enrichment?

Interlinear Text

בִּין	שׁוֹרֵת מ	יִצָּה ירו	יִקְב ים	וְרָכ ו	וְצָמָא:
within	their walls	Which make oil	their winepresses	and tread	and suffer thirst
H996	H7791	H6671	H3342	H1869	H6770

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 22:13 (Parallel theme): Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

James 5:4 (Parallel theme): Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

