

Job 24:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light.

Analysis

In the dark they dig through houses—Job describes burglars who breach mud-brick walls under cover of darkness. The verb "dig through" (chatar, חָתַר) was literal in ancient Near Eastern architecture where homes had sun-dried brick walls that could be excavated (compare Matthew 6:19, "where thieves break through and steal," using Greek dioryssō, to dig through). The phrase ba-choshek (בַּחֹשֶׁךְ, "in the dark") emphasizes moral and physical darkness.

Which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light—These criminals case targets during daylight, then strike at night. "They know not the light" is multilayered: literally, they avoid daylight to escape detection; morally, they dwell in spiritual darkness (compare John 3:19-20, "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"). Job's theodicy complaint intensifies: wicked men plan crimes openly, execute them secretly, yet continue unpunished. Where is divine justice?

Historical Context

Archaeological evidence from patriarchal-era homes shows mud-brick construction vulnerable to wall-breaching. Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Code of Hammurabi §21) prescribed death for burglary, yet enforcement depended on catching perpetrators. Job lived before Israel's monarchy with its judicial infrastructure, making property crimes difficult to prosecute in tribal societies.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the burglar's meticulous planning ('marked for themselves in the daytime') reveal that sin is rarely impulsive but often calculated?
2. What does it mean spiritually to 'know not the light' when living in habitual sin?
3. How does Christ as 'the light of the world' (John 8:12) expose our hidden darkness?

Interlinear Text

חָתְרוּ	בַּח' שְׁנָן	בְּ תַיִם	יוֹמָם
they dig through	In the dark	houses	for themselves in the daytime
H2864	H2822	H1004	H3119
חֲתָמוּ	לְ מוֹ	לֹא יָדְעוּ	אֹר:
which they had marked	H0	H3808	they know not the light
H2856		H3045	H216

Additional Cross-References

John 3:20 (Light): For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.