

Job 24:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

Analysis

For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death—Job employs powerful irony: while normal people dread darkness, the wicked fear daylight. "Morning" (boqer, בּוֹקֵר) typically symbolizes deliverance and divine favor (Psalm 30:5, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"). But for evildoers, dawn brings "the shadow of death" (tsalmaveth, תְּשַׁלְמָוֶת), the same term describing deep darkness and mortal danger (Psalm 23:4). Their moral inversion is complete.

If one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death—Exposure terrifies the wicked more than death itself. "Know them" (יְعִיר) means recognition or identification—if their identity is discovered, they experience ballahot tsalmaveth (בְּלָהָות תְּשַׁלְמָוֶת), the "terrors of death-shadow." This anticipates Jesus's teaching that "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed" (Luke 12:2). Yet Job's frustration remains: Why doesn't God expose and judge now?

Historical Context

The "shadow of death" appears frequently in wisdom literature and psalms, often describing life-threatening danger or deepest darkness. Job's use here inverts typical symbolism: the wicked fear light that exposes rather than darkness that threatens. This reflects the moral chaos Job perceives in a world where retribution seems absent.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the wicked person's fear of exposure ('morning is to them even as the shadow of death') reveal the psychological torment of hidden sin?
2. What does the moral inversion—fearing light, loving darkness—teach about sin's deforming power on human nature?
3. How does Christ's promise that all secrets will be revealed (Luke 12:2-3) both warn the wicked and comfort the oppressed?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	צְלָמִות:	לִמְזָה	בְּקָרָב	וְיַחַד	כִּי
H3588	is to them even as	H1242	For the morning	H0	of the shadow of death
H3162				H6757	H3588
יְדֹוֹת	צְלָמִות:	לִמְזָה	בְּקָרָב	וְיַחַד	כִּי
if one know	them they are in the terrors	of the shadow of death			
H5234	H1091	H6757			

Additional Cross-References

Job 3:5 (Parallel theme): Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.