

Job 24:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.

Analysis

They turn the needy out of the way (יָטוּ אֶבְיוֹנִים מִדֶּרֶךְ, yattú evyoním middarékḥ)—The verb natah (נָטָה) means to thrust aside, push off course, or pervert. The evyoním (needy/poor) are literally shoved off the path, denied access to public roads, markets, and justice. This describes systematic marginalization—the poor become invisible, forced to hide to survive. The 'way' (דֶּרֶךְ, derek) often symbolizes the path of justice and righteousness in wisdom literature.

The poor of the earth hide themselves together (יָחַד חָבְאוּ עַנְיֵי-אֶרֶץ, yáchad chub'ú aniyyéi-árets)—The verb chaba (חָבָא) means to hide or conceal oneself, used of fugitives seeking refuge (1 Samuel 13:6). The poor aren't scattered but banded together (יָחַד, yachad—unitedly) for mutual protection, driven underground by oppression. This poignant image anticipates Jesus's concern for 'the least of these' (Matthew 25:40) and His pronouncement that the gospel is preached to the poor (Luke 4:18). The prophets repeatedly condemned societies where the poor must hide (Isaiah 10:1-2, Amos 5:11-12).

Historical Context

In ancient agrarian economies, access to common areas—roads, wells, markets, city gates (courts)—was essential for survival. Powerful landowners could effectively banish the poor by denying access or creating hostile environments. Job describes a society where the vulnerable have lost all social standing, forced to

exist on the margins. This pattern repeats throughout history when justice systems serve the powerful rather than protecting the weak.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Who are the 'hidden poor' in your community—those pushed to society's margins, invisible to comfortable citizens?
2. How does Job's description challenge the narrative that poverty results from laziness rather than systemic oppression?
3. What practical steps can believers take to ensure the poor have access to justice, opportunity, and dignity?

Interlinear Text

עָלֵיהֶם הִבָּא וְ
 יָחַד מִדְּרֹךְ
 אֲבִינָם יִטּוּ
 וְהִבִּיטוּ

They turn
 H5186

the needy
 H34

out of the way
 H1870

themselves together
 H3162

hide
 H2244

H6035

אַרְצָא
of the earth
H776

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:28 (Parallel theme): When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

Job 24:14 (Parallel theme): The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.

Amos 2:7 (Parallel theme): That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:

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