

# Job 24:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children.

## Analysis

**As wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work** (בָּעֲרָדִים בַּמִּדְבָּר, ke'aródim bammidbar)—Job shifts from oppressors to their victims. The arod (עֲרֹוד) is the onager or wild donkey, a creature living in harsh desert conditions, constantly foraging for survival (Jeremiah 2:24, Hosea 8:9). The comparison emphasizes the dehumanizing effect of poverty—the oppressed are reduced to animal-like existence, driven purely by survival instinct. Their 'work' (פָּעָל, pa'al) isn't dignified labor but desperate scavenging.

**Rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children**—'Rising betimes' translates mishcharím (מִשְׁחָרִים), meaning early rising, pre-dawn labor. The poor hunt for 'prey' (teref, טְרֵף—food torn or hunted), the same word used for what predators kill. The 'wilderness' (ערָבָה, araba) yields meager sustenance—their children eat what the desert provides. This powerful image shows poverty's generational curse: children inherit their parents' desperate existence. Jesus later taught His disciples about God feeding the birds (Matthew 6:26), but Job's point is that humans shouldn't be reduced to such precarious provision.

## Historical Context

Desert nomadism was the lowest social status in ancient Near Eastern culture—agriculturalists and city-dwellers looked down on those who roamed wastelands.

Job's description suggests the poor are driven from productive farmland into marginal desert areas, forced to live like animals. This happened repeatedly in Israelite history when the powerful seized land (1 Kings 21, Isaiah 5:8, Micah 2:1-2). The situation Job describes violates God's vision for Israel where each family lives securely under their own vine and fig tree (1 Kings 4:25, Micah 4:4).

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does this verse challenge comfortable assumptions that people choose their economic circumstances?
2. What does Job's empathy for the poor reveal about authentic righteousness versus self-absorbed piety?
3. How can believers work to restore human dignity to those reduced to survival mode by systemic poverty?

## Interlinear Text

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מִשְׁׁחָרִים בְּפָעָלָם יְצַא אֵלֶיךָ רַבָּדָבֶת בְּמִלְחָמָה יְמִינָךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
H2005 Behold as wild asses in the desert go they forth to their work rising betimes  
H6501 H4057 H3318 H6467 H7836

לְנָעָרִים: לְצַדְקָה הַעֲבָדָה יְלִזְלֵב נָעָם יְמִינָךְ לְצַדְקָה  
for a prey the wilderness H0 yieldeth food for them and for their children  
H2964 H6160 H3899 H5288

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 104:23** (Parallel theme): Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

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