

Job 27:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh.

Analysis

He buildeth his house as a moth—the Hebrew שׁעַ (ash, moth) creates a startling image. The moth's "house" is its cocoon, easily destroyed and temporary. Some translations render this "moth-eaten house," but the point is fragility—elaborate construction with no permanence. **As a booth that the keeper maketh** uses סֻכָּה (sukkah, temporary shelter), the same word for the temporary dwellings in the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:42-43). A watchman's booth (נִצָּר, notser, keeper/guard) was a flimsy structure in fields or vineyards, abandoned after harvest.

Job employs two images of impermanence: the moth's cocoon and the watchman's temporary hut. Despite the wicked person's investment in building security—house, wealth, legacy—it's fundamentally unstable. This contrasts with the righteous, whose house is built on the rock (Matthew 7:24-27). The imagery anticipates Jesus's teaching about foolish builders.

Historical Context

Ancient agricultural societies used temporary booths (sukkot) for field workers during planting and harvest. These simple structures provided minimal shelter and were abandoned afterward. Israel's Feast of Tabernacles commemorated wilderness wandering by requiring Israelites to dwell in temporary shelters (Leviticus 23:42-43), teaching dependence on God rather than permanent dwellings. Job's imagery would resonate powerfully with his original audience.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What "houses" (securities, achievements, reputations) are we building that might be as fragile as a moth's cocoon?
2. How does the temporary nature of earthly dwelling challenge our investment in material security?
3. What does it mean to build our lives on the eternal foundation rather than temporary structures?

Interlinear Text

נָצַר:	עָשָׂה	בֵּית	כַּעַשְׂנֵה	כַּעַשְׂנֵה	בָּנֵה
He buildeth	as a moth	his house	and as a booth	maketh	that the keeper
H1129	H6211	H1004	H5521	H6213	H5341

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 1:8 (Parallel theme): And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

Isaiah 51:8 (Parallel theme): For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.